



Window on Jordan

By Ittissam Awadat
Special to The Star

READING A the morning newspaper over a cup of coffee or tea is still a passion shared by millions. But many prefer to read their newspapers from back to front. What do they look for? The daily cartoon, of course. Cartoonists are as essential to a newspaper as reporters and editors. Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish said that it was the late political cartoonist Naji Al Ali who pushed Arabs to begin reading their newspapers from the last page. And in Jordan the art of political and social cartoons has been developing rapidly despite the limited

number of professional cartoonists in this country. However, what Jordan has already matches and in some cases surpasses the work of other cartoonists in the Arab world. Veteran caricaturist Jalal Al Refai is today at the top of his profession. He started his career in Ad Dustour Arabic daily which is considered as a pioneer in devoting space for cartoons on its pages. "In this area, we are still at the beginning of the road and its going to take quite a while before we could make a proper evaluation of this kind of art and of the people who are working in it," Al Refai says.

Experienced cartoonists say they only need the inspiration, then everything goes perfect. "I have no special procedures or rituals. In the morning I read the daily and weekly newspapers then listen to the news on radio to choose the subject which I think interests the readers and me," Al Refai continues. "Then I spend the rest of the time trying to select one good idea which doesn't contradict with the newspaper's policy." If he is inspired or not in a good mood, "I drive my car around, watching and thinking till I find the right subject." When the idea becomes clear in his head he hur-



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Al Refai

The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

Le Jourdain
Supplément en français du Star

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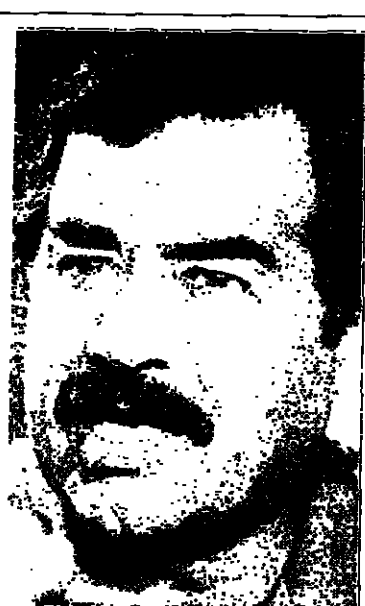
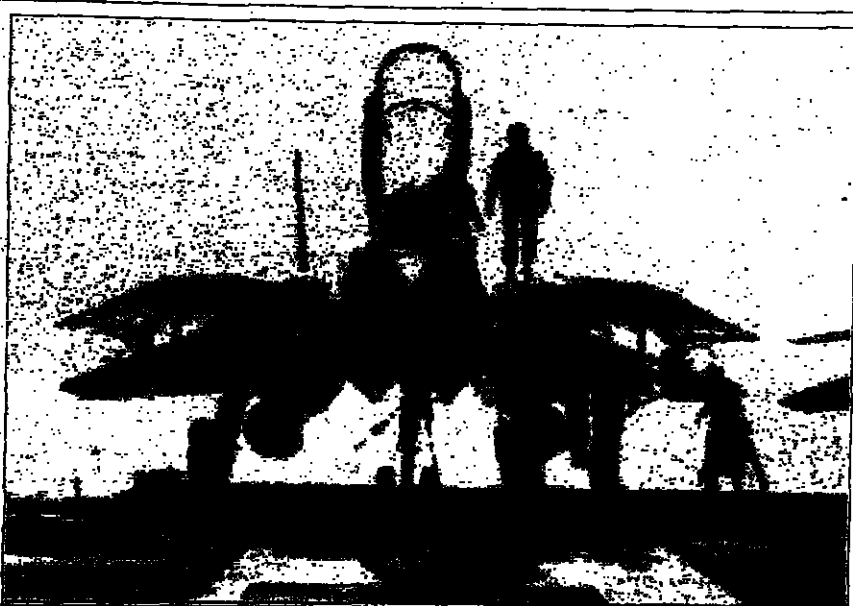
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AMMAN, 12 — 18 FEBRUARY 1998, VOLUME 8, NUMBER 37, 350 FILS

اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة



'Desert Thunder' ready in 10 days

Odds in favor of a military strike

Cohen cites growing Gulf support for attack, Iraq sends envoys to Arab capitals

By Bradley Graham
and agency reports

THE STANDOFF between the United Nations and Iraq over UN inspections of Iraqi sites continued as the United States heaped up its military presence in the Gulf in preparation for a possible military strike, codenamed "Desert Thunder," against Baghdad. While Russian and French efforts intensified to find a diplomatic way out, US officials mounted their own campaign to rally support for the military option. At the same time Iraq sent envoys to Arab capitals to explain its position and drum up backing for a new initiative to defuse the crisis.

ing unconditional inspection of suspected weapons sites. Cohen's characterization of the position of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states went further than Arab authorities themselves have asserted publicly. But the secretary said he had been buoyed by private expressions of solidarity from Gulf officials and indications that the United States will be able to use the bases, pre-positioned military equipment and airspace needed to conduct the kind of air assaults on Iraqi targets that are under consideration. "All of the leaders see (President) Saddam Hussein as a threat," Cohen told reporters traveling with him. "Obviously, they are hopeful a military solution is not necessary, but they are supportive of the United States action to enforce the resolutions if necessary." Asked if that backing would extend to military strikes, Cohen replied: "The answer to that is yes."

Albright: 'A very substantial strike'

In Washington, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee the United States was planning "a very substantial strike" against Iraq if diplomatic efforts do not end the crisis and said that "if we get even any hint of the fact that (Saddam Hussein) is reconstituting, we will strike again."

Cohen's comments suggested some progress in persuading America's Gulf allies to accept supporting roles in a potential military operation that they still view with deep misgivings. Just last week, after visiting with some of the same Arab leaders, the most encouragement that Albright said she could draw was that none had expressed outright opposition to the use of force against Iraq.

In Oman Tuesday, where Cohen met in a tented desert encampment with Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the US secretary came away with permission to station five tanker aircraft and, if necessary, pull from stocks of US Air Force tanks stored in the country. US officials said. In the United Arab Emirates, Cohen was advised the United States could continue to operate tankers in and out of the country during any attacks on Iraq. And in Qatar, where Cohen arrived Tuesday night for

Weeklies make a triumphant come back, publishers say they will sue government

By Raed Al Abed
Star Staff Writer

AFTER FOUR months of absence, most of the 13 weekly newspapers closed down under a temporary press law are making a come back after winning a historical High Court of Justice case last month. The Court found the temporary law unconstitutional and decided that all government measures based on that law were illegal. It was the first time in Jordan's history that a temporary law was annulled by the highest court in the land. In a separate ruling, the Court reversed a government decision to revoke the licenses of 13 weekly newspapers. Few publications of more than 20 weekly newspapers were able to comply with the tough measures slapped by the temporary law after it was imposed by the government last May. Thirteen weeklies faced suspension and then closure for failing to comply with controversial articles in the temporary law that required a 20-



Mutawe

time increase in capital, from JD 15,000 to JD 300,000. Director of the Press and Publication Dept. Bilal Al Tal informed 11 weeklies of the Prime Ministry's acceptance of the Court's ruling last week. This move came after a period of confusion that followed the Court's decision. The government took time to come to grips with the new reality and finally succumbed to the fact that its notorious law and the measures it had taken against the press have been annulled. But not before the Press and Publications Department's decision to confiscate copies of Hawadeth Al Sa'a weekly last week. It asked publishers to re-apply for licenses, then backed off and allowed them to publish under their original permits. On Monday, Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawe would not confirm the government's final position on this issue. He was unaware of the Prime Minister's decision to allow the suspended weeklies to publish. In an interview with The Star on Monday, Mr Mutawe said he was still waiting for the Prime Minister's decision to be submitted to him. But on that day, Al Tal had already informed the 13 weeklies of the Premier's instructions to resume publication. Mutawe could not confirm or deny if the government was planning to issue a new press law. He said the temporary press law has been sent to Parliament and that it was up to deputies to decide its fate. "We might have other priorities more important than issuing a new press law," Mutawe said. He added the government was not delaying the implementation of the High Court verdict but such regulations needed time to pass through routine measures. Several weeklies have already re-applied. Al Bilad, Hawadeth Al Sa'a and Al Najm Al Arabi hit the newsstands this week while others plan to publish within weeks. The Court's ruling has put the government on the defensive. It took its time to comply, and considered referring the matter to Parliament and to other legal bodies. The Court's ruling and the government's initial reaction to it, unleashed an intensive legal debate. At one point, the government appeared to be leaning towards ignoring the verdict, claiming that one of the 10-judge panel of the general committee of the High Court opposed the decision. Then it suggested that the weeklies must apply for new licenses. But until now no clear position on this issue has been made by the Prime Minister himself.

Government bans rallies to control public mood

AMMAN (Star)—With prospects of a showdown between Iraq and the US looming closer, Jordanians are being told not to express their emotions through a repeat of massive demonstrations and public rallies similar to those of 1990 and 1991. And this time the government is taking measures to make sure that people keep their emotions to themselves. After a short visit to the Prime Ministry on Tuesday, His Majesty King Hussein told reporters that the government has taken all necessary measures and he hoped that matters will be moving in the right direction. The King reviewed with Cabinet members precautionary measures taken by the government to face possible escalation in the Gulf situation. Minister of Interior Nasseer Rashid announced that he will not allow public marches for any reason. The minister said "the latest ban was taken to safeguard the country's interest and avoid any attempt harboring ill-intentions against the country to infiltrate into our ranks." Government officials said there is no intention to declare emergency alert in the country. But high-level meetings to direct public opinion have taken place this week involving public security, interior and intelligence officials. But the opposition alliance plans to challenge Rashid's ban. The 12 opposition party alliance, joined by a number of independent personalities and professional associations, held a festival Monday in solidarity with Iraq. Speakers declared that they will carry demonstrations and rallies whether the authorities permit them or not. Amman Governor Talal Nawaiseh warned that unauthorized marches will be dealt with strictly. He was responding to reports that political parties plan to hold a march on Friday that will begin from the Hussein Mosque in downtown. Prime Minister Abdel Salam Al Majali will discuss the matter with political party heads on Thursday. The parties will hold a press conference to declare their position after the meeting.

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Palestinian support for Iraq regime waning since '91

By Rebecca Trounson

RAMALLAH, West Bank—Najah Samara blamed Monday's cold, rainy weather for keeping other Palestinians from showing up for a protest in support of Iraq and its president, Saddam Hussein. But her enthusiasm was undiminished as she stood in a hazy view of this Palestinian-ruled city, watching as a few hundred bedraggled marchers passed by, chanting pro-Iraq slogans and struggling to burn a sodden American flag. "There is no Arab country that has such a leader," Samara, 29, said of the Iraqi president, now engaged in a tense standoff with the United States over his refusal to allow unrestricted weapons inspections. "He is fighting for Arab rights against the United States and Israel."

But these days, popular support for Saddam among Palestinians is lower than it was in 1991. While some still view him as an Arab champion standing up to the world's only superpower, many others distinguish between their sympathy for the Iraqi people and backing their president. "We support the people of Iraq but not the regime, because it is bad and makes many mistakes," said Ziad Fahr, 40, who owns a Ramallah fabric store with his younger brother. He and other Palestinians are also more realistic about Iraq's ability to play a wider role in regional affairs, he said. With parts of Iraqi airspace already patrolled by US military jets, "I do not think Iraq would be able to liberate Palestine," as many Palestinians believed possible in 1991, he said. "Let them liberate their own north and south first."



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Four arrested for possession of stolen Picassos

AMMAN (Star)—Police on Monday arrested four people for possessing stolen works of art believed to be by the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso. Two unidentified paintings and a bronze statue, said to be called "Poverty and Freedom", were being offered for sale in Jordan for JD 9 million. Press reports say the four men, two Jordanians and two Iraqis, were planning to sell the works of art on behalf of an Iraqi living in Baghdad. Police now has custody of the paintings and the statue and is verifying their authenticity. The works of art are believed to have been smuggled from Iraq. Sources said the items were rapped in aluminum folding in order not attract the attention of

the customs at the border crossing. The stolen artwork entered Jordan through Al Ruweished check-point on the Iraqi-Jordanian borders. The men were caught after police at Al Hussein and Marka precincts were tipped off. "We received information that original artwork by Picasso were being offered for sale for JD 9 million," Major Abdul Majeed Al Momani, chief of Marka police station told The Star. "Police officers ambushed the suspects and arrested them at Abjar Hotel in Jabal Al Hussein."

Initial interrogation revealed that the four men were planning to sell the artwork on behalf of an Iraqi national who is staying in Baghdad. However, the suspects denied that they know the original source of the Picassos or how the Iraqi owner managed to get them. Unconfirmed reports said the pieces were stolen from Kuwaiti royal palaces during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait more than seven years ago. The seized artwork were placed at the headquarters of the Public Security Dept. pending information on their authenticity, value and owners. Police officials are trying to contact international art experts to ask for their assistance. The real value of the pieces cannot be established without expert opinion. According to local artists, there are no qualified experts in the country to determine if the works seized are real Picassos.

Cartoons spice up local press

Continued from page 1

ries to his tools. "It doesn't matter about the surroundings when I begin to draw, television or radio don't bother me, and I just immerse myself with the characters, interacting with them during their happy or sad situations," he says.

But if he is not careful, a professional cartoonist could easily get into trouble. Drawing caricatures is a risky business. "Some people or officials think that I deliberately set out to mock them, but it's certainly not my intention. I don't criticize individuals but situations and living conditions," Al Refai explains.

He is also gaining a bit of reputation on the other side. Al Refai is currently facing a well-organized campaign in Israel and especially from Netanyahu's government. "They've put together a collection of my work and presented it to the Human Rights Organization, and accused me of anti-Semitism," Al Refai says. But he swiftly brushes off the accusation and continues to work.

To be a successful cartoonist you need "the main base which is talent. Without it, it would be worthless to try anything, you need to have the spirit of criticism and irony." This is of course "in addition to the clear idea and strong lines, that would

make the cartoon perfect," Al Refai explains.

Throughout his career, which began in the 1970's, Al Refai ran into many problems especially with officials who think that they are the target of his satire.

"Once I drew a person who says to his boss 'thank God it was the governmental car which was involved in the accident and not yours.' One day later, a senior civil servant, whom I didn't know, phoned me to defend his position and denied taking advantage of public services."

Another cartoonist, who gained his popularity in the last few years is Imad Hajaj of Al Rai Arabic daily. He owes his fame to one of his characters, Abu Mahjoub, who has become a Jordanian icon.

Hajaj, who began drawing as a hobby as a child, was strongly affected by the scribbles made by his father.

The first step towards painting as a profession began when he won the first prize for a competition organized by the Ministry of Education on the occasion of "The second anniversary to the burning of Al Aqsa Mosque."

"To win the first prize at the age of 8 urged me to think seriously about drawing," Hajaj says.

He admits that Naji Al Ali, who was

assassinated in London in the 1980's, had a profound effect on him. "In the eighties I began to imitate perfectly the drawings of Naji and the characters of the film cartoons," Hajaj says.

Today Hajaj is known as a diligent artist. He says he sometimes needs five to six hours to prepare one work.

"During the day, I hear the latest news, then when I go to the newspaper in the evening, I switch to a meditative mode which may last for up to three hours. Then I begin to scribble for nearly one hour, finally I put my sketch together."

As Hajaj says he waits for the right idea or inspiration if it doesn't come, then he doesn't draw.

Hajaj, who had his first exhibition last year in Al Fuhais, faced resentment during the signature of the Oslo Agreement from the then Palestinian ambassador in Amman, and other people who had different point of views.

"I consider cartoons a very dangerous weapon, whose effects are similar to the atomic bomb, but I know that there are red lines which must be taken into consideration, but still the cartoon can make a difference."

There is an interesting story to the Abu Mahjoub character. "I created this



character during the 1993 elections. Abu Mahjoub worked as the manager of an electoral campaign for one of the candidates." After the elections, Hajaj contin-

ued with the character to criticize and make quips of social and political issues. Naturally, Abu Mahjoub ran for parliament in 1997—and lost! ■

Prince Hassan to open oil and diplomacy conference

AMMAN (Star)—A two-day conference on "Arab Oil and Diplomacy: Towards the 21st Century" will be held in Amman between 24-25 February. The event will be held under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan. It is organized by the Institute of Diplomacy. It will be attended by a number of Arab and foreign intellectuals, politicians and economic figures. Prince Hassan will deliver a keynote speech.

President of the Institute of Diplomacy Dr. Kamel Abu Jaber said the conference will focus on Arab oil and its relations to regional development as well as UN and sanctions and the new dimension of oil culture and the effects of the oil boom on Arab culture.

Dr. Abu Jaber said the conference will seek to formulate a futuristic vision on how to make oil a unifying factor in the third millennium at Arab, regional and human levels. It will also highlight the role of diplomacy in facilitating communications between countries and institutions.

Among those attending will be former Saudi oil minister Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani, former Iraqi oil minister Issam Shalabi, General Secretary of the Arab Thought Forum Dr. Ali Attiga who is former general secretary of OPEC, General Secretary of OPEC Dr. Lukman and Vice President of the Institute of Diplomacy HRH Princess Wijdan Ali and former US assistant secretary of state Robert Pelletreau among others. ■

Palestinian support for Iraq regime waning

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Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and chanted, "With our blood and soul, we sacrifice for you, Saddam." As the rain briefly turned to hail, a few protesters fell behind, trying repeatedly to set ablaze an American flag. They finally abandoned the effort, settling for tearing the flag to shreds before rejoining the others.

Palestinians held two other pro-Iraq rallies Monday. In the West Bank town of Janin, about 2,000 people marched, with one man carrying a model of a Scud missile; another 200 rallied in Gaza City, dressed in white clothing apparently meant to represent shrouds to show the effects of the international sanctions on the Iraqi people.

The Palestinians have opposed a US military strike but have refrained from expressing any support for Saddam Hussein. "We hope that the crisis will be solved by diplomatic means," Arafat said after meeting with the European Commission president in Gaza City.

In 1991, Arafat and other Palestinian leaders backed Iraq against the US-led coalition. Still, Israeli officials on Monday criticized the rallies and warned against any official support for Iraq among Palestinians. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Regional workshop looks at Internet uses for journalists

By Ibtisam Awadat
Star Staff Writer

SIXTEEN JOURNALISTS from Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, UK, Palestine and Turkey gathered in Amman last week for a three-day workshop on the applications of the Internet in the media.

The event was held under the theme of "Internet for journalists" and was jointly organized by Jemstone, part of the Med-Media program in the Eastern Mediterranean, in partnership with One World On Line, an online news provider.

The workshop concentrated on three main areas. "First, using the Internet as a research tool, so we looked for the most useful sites, second, we concentrated on creating and developing web sites and finally we talked about the importance of using e-mail," Tudor Lomas, Jemstone's director in Jordan, said.

He said the purpose behind holding such events "is the great benefit which journalists will gain by exchanging their experiences with others."

Participants visited businesses that have various Internet applications such as Books@Cafe, one of Amman's booming Internet cafes, and ArabiaOnLine, a leading content provider. Facilities were provided by Ideal Systems, a local hardware and technical solutions company.

British news editor Mark Lynas of One World Online, said he was involved in many workshops before. "We try to learn from available technologies, such as the Internet, to make journalism more democratic and more effective," he said. One World Online news service covers human rights, environmental and social justice issues around the world.

"We are adding to the Internet's outreach and flexibility, in order to put the debate about global justice firmly on the world's agenda," Lynas said. He said he was pleased with the level of participants and their skills in using the Internet.

Discussions between participants and experts focused on important areas with the aim of pinpointing the best ways to use the Internet. Journalists also exchanged

experiences on using and creating web sites.

One participant from Egypt, Amer Abd Al Monem, talked about his experience at Al Shaab newspaper, which is "the only Egyptian opposition paper which represents the Labor Party on the Internet."

According to Lomas, journalists themselves suggested the theme of this workshop because they believe that "journalists who use the Internet must meet and create a regional network."

"The Internet is a good medium for Muslims and Arabs to use to explain their point of view and defend their causes instead of being on the receiving end," Abd Al Monem said.

"Through the net, we can get information from its original source instead of depending on foreign news agencies," Still there are problems involved and one of them is the cost of using this technology.

"Newspapers in the Arab world need support if they want to adapt to and use modern technologies in order to present good material to their readers," Abd Al Monem said. ■

Odds in favor of a military strike

Continued from page 1

Iraq last autumn—the assurances from the Gulf allies led Cohen and his aides to speak of growing momentum toward a more united international front against Iraq.

A shakier coalition?

Britain was the first to pledge military support (for such a goal). It has dispatched the carrier HMS Invincible, 2,500 personnel, and eight Tornado ground-attack planes. US officials have said they have the forces and material they need for what is expected to be an air campaign of a few days to a week. They have said the United States will be ready to go within 10 days, when aircraft, ships and troops now en route reach the Gulf.

"There is a coalition that's building, and you've seen signs of that over the last few days," said one senior defense official on Cohen's plane. "Everyone still wants a diplo-

matic solution, but there's a growing sense that this is a multilateral problem centered on two issues: Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and the credibility of UN Security Council resolutions."

Nonetheless, the outlines of this emerging coalition remain far more limited and shakier than the grand international one assembled by the United States eight years ago to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait. While the Gulf states have signalled a willingness to provide varying degrees of military cooperation, none has issued statements officially acknowledging military action as a last resort if Iraq persists in defying UN resolutions. They remain far from enthusiastic at the prospect of US and British air strikes.

Public opinion in their countries is deeply sympathetic to the plight of the Iraqi people, hit hard by sanctions, and the Gulf nations are united in emphasizing the need for a diplomatic solution

to the standoff.

Iraq denies sending message to Israel

Meanwhile, Iraq has reportedly sent Israel a message pledging not to launch a missile attack against the Jewish state, Iraq denied making any such promise. Israel radio first reported the alleged Iraqi message, saying Russian intermediaries delivered it to Israel on Monday.

Iraq leader Saddam Hussein stressed in the message that he had neither the ability nor intention to attack Israel, Israel radio said. However, Iraq's state-run Iraqi News Agency quoted an Information Ministry spokesman as "categorically" denying that Saddam had sent any message to Israel.

Iraq has repeatedly denied possessing any missiles that could reach Israel and its officials have denied any aggressive intent toward Israel.

However, Israeli officials have said they believe that Iraq still is hiding at least a few missiles and launchers. Earlier, Israel's Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said Israel believed Iraq had chemical and biological weapons but there was only "a very small chance of Iraq using any kind of weapon against us." He added that if Iraq did attack, "We have freedom of action to do what is necessary."

Despite such assurances, the crush at gas mask distribution centers throughout the country continued, with some centers closing down for hours to await new supplies. Sources said at least 30,000 masks had been distributed by Tuesday.

During the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq fired 39 Scud missiles with conventional warheads at Israel.

Iraq's diplomatic offensive

As political activities intensified, Iraq's leadership launched its own diplomatic offensive. Top Iraqi officials began a regional mission to explain Baghdad's position. It was reported that President Saddam will ask Egypt to support an Arab solution.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf arrived in Cairo from Syria after meeting Syrian President Hafez Assad in Damascus Tuesday. Sahaf is carrying a written message from the Iraqi President to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Iraq in Tuesday confirmed its acceptance of a proposal under which it will members of the UN Security Council access to sensitive sites.

Sahaf is also carrying another communique from the Iraqi president to the secretary-general of the Arab League, Esmat Abdel Meguid, which includes replies to the suggestions Meguid made during his recent visit to Baghdad.

Other Iraqi emissaries will visit Jordan, Oman, Qatar and Iran. ■

Conservationists meet in Amman to identify future strategies

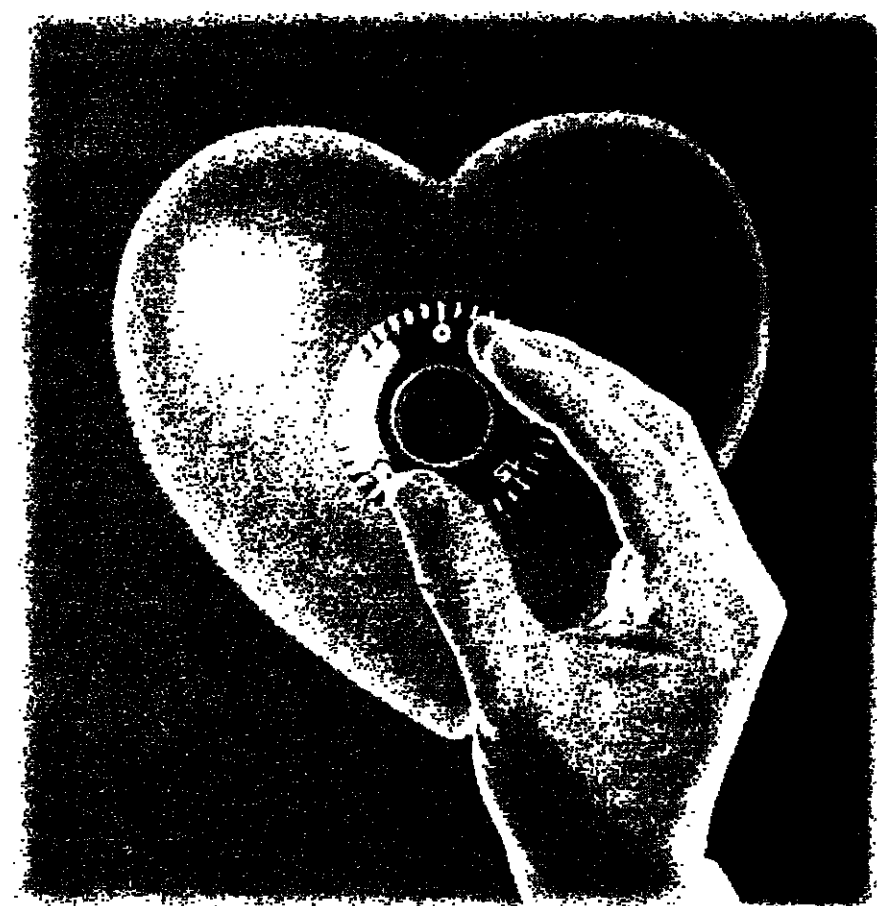
AMMAN (Star)—Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in cooperation with the IUCN National Committee, opened the IUCN Forum on Tuesday at the Royal Cultural Center. The forum is a gathering of IUCN members,

commissions and partners. It is a meeting mainly on programming on main conservation issues of this region. The event is also a follow up of 1st regional forum held in Riyadh in 1995.

The Amman event aims at identifying future directions and priorities for the IUCN

members and commissions in the region. It also seeks to strengthen collaboration between IUCN members/commissions/partners and activities in West Asia, North Africa and Central Asia.

The Amman Forum will concentrate on the work of six IUCN commissions. The Species Survival Commission (SSC) will focus on sustainable use and Red Data book. WCPA will focus on a Middle East/North Africa Regional Strategy and action plan; Commission for Environmental Law (CEL) will focus on regional environmental law centre and environment and Environment (CEC) will focus on environmental education and communication, as a cross entering theme in protected areas and biodiversity, environmental Strategy and Planning CESP will focus on cost sharing, economic benefits. ■



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- The Royal Cultural Center, tel. 5669026
- The National Music Conservatory, tel. 5687620

Weeklies make a come back

Continued from page 1

"The Court canceled these measures. How can we neglect the decision of the majority of judges and take the opinion of one judge?" asked Hani Al Dahleh, a member of the defense team on behalf of the weeklies.

A number of publishers have announced that they will be taking the government to court to ask for compensation. The compensation suits, Al Dahleh said, will be the first of their kind in the history of the High Court.

Musa Keitani, chief editor of Al Urdun weekly, said he is planning to file three lawsuits against the government calling for JD 100,000 in compensation for damages.

Tajeddine Al Hroub, publisher of Hawadeh Al Sa'a and managing editor of Al Bilad, said he is determined to sue the government.

On his part, Nidal Mansour, chief editor of Al Hadeeth weekly, is preparing to re-launch his paper within the coming two weeks.

However, Mansour said he will not take legal action against the government. He said he is keen to maintain positive relations with the executive authority. ■

Lurie's NewsCartoon



"Saddam Hussein's special envoy to discuss reconciliation, Mr. President."

Our Say...

War is not an option

THE UNITED STATES and Britain are going to war. They are moving fighter jets, bombers, aircraft carriers and ground troops into the oil-rich Gulf region in a repeat of the 1990-91 military build-up against Iraq. But this time the war effort is not aimed at evicting Iraq from Kuwait. On the surface, the Anglo-American coalition is seeking to destroy Saddam Hussein's chemical and biological weapons capabilities. These capabilities have allegedly escaped the thorough and comprehensive seven-year-old rigorous inspection regime installed by the United Nations.

Both countries, as their leaders made clear in their recent meeting in Washington, are concerned about world peace, UN legitimacy and regional security. But their actions belie these lofty objectives. A war against Iraq will not secure any of these principles. On the contrary, a new war in the Gulf region will endanger world and regional stability and will shatter UN credibility forever.

The world is divided about a way out of the current standoff between Iraq and the United Nations. With the United States and Britain pushing for war, the majority in the international community prefer a diplomatic settlement. In contrast to the crisis of the early 1990s, this time Iraq is seriously seeking a political formula that will ensure its compliance with UN resolutions and a quick end to seven years of brutal sanctions.

The Americans and Britain believe they have the necessary authorization from the Security Council to carry out their aggression on Iraq. Others, like Russia and China, disagree. In the event of a lengthy and painful operation against Iraq, the political damage will affect all those involved.

As time runs out for a peaceful outcome to this crisis, the realities of the military showdown become ominous and ever-present. The Americans talk of substantial strikes with the number of casualties on the Iraqi side reaching thousands. What exactly will the ultimate objective, and outcome, of "Desert Thunder" be is the question that requires a straight answer.

There is a sinking feeling that US and British aims may go beyond hitting Saddam's presidential palaces, where suspected weapons of mass destruction are allegedly stored. Both countries could end up wiping out Iraq's infrastructure, conventional, and legitimate, defense systems in addition to its central government—all under the cover of the United Nations resolutions. Both countries will not be made accountable to the outcome, whether it is the division of Iraq or the unleashing of a devastating civil war there.

Head of UNSCOM, Richard Butler, and US envoy to the UN Bill Richardson both talked about Iraq being a threat to Israel. These statements put the credibility of the current operation on the balance, especially when the Middle East peace process is gasping for life because of Israel's refusal to abide by its obligations under international law.

Iraq should deny the Anglo-American alliance the pleasure of launching a hi-tech war which will clearly go beyond its stated objectives. The timing of this crisis, just when the world was putting pressure on the Americans to end Iraq's humanitarian suffering, is not a coincidence. Iraq should now defuse the crisis and deny the US and Britain the reason to bomb out Baghdad.

Letters to the Editor

Arab response on Iraq

To the editor
I am an ordinary person who has observed with amazement the lack of forceful Arab response to the war propaganda now being drummed up by the US. Has it occurred to any body in the Arab world or indeed in the whole world that for once Iraq could be telling the truth. Why should the world simply sit and watch the US again devastate Iraqi people just for a suspicion that they may be keeping weapons of "mass destruction." What will the world say fifty years down the road if it is established that the was no need to use military force on Iraq. The US will never bomb a European country time and time again. I guess Arab lives don't count. You guys should speak out against such injustice before the US kills thousands of innocent people in Iraq. Today it is Iraq, tomorrow Libya next day Syria, when is this going to stop?

Sam Odngto, Calgary, Canada.

Another view on flirting

To the editor
I read with interest your article by Ibtisam Awadat on flirting in Jordan in the January 28 issue of The Star. I am writing you from Texas. Flirting here is not such a problem, but I wish it were. Our country seems to be sexually obsessed with all the President Clinton alleged affairs.
I teach in High School here and flirting goes on all the time. I think it is some form of mating ritual, but sometimes the girls get annoyed. Usually not if they enjoy the company of the boy doing the flirting, but otherwise they just wish the boy would go away. The families, fathers, etc. usually don't get involved. I think it is a cultural difference in our two countries. I wish the USA didn't think about sex so much. I get very tired of hearing it on the news.
I hope your country stays out of harms way if fighting breaks out in Iraq.

Richard Warren Berkley, <berkley@swbell.net>

Q&A with the Iraqi ambassador Nizar Hamdoon
Whither relations with the US?

By Richard B. Strass

NIZAR HAMDOON is a busy man. The main reason Hamdoon is so in demand is that, as Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations, he is Saddam Hussein's point man in the United States. And, once again, it looks as if the two countries are destined to face off in combat.

But Hamdoon also is sought after because he is an adroit interlocutor. From the time he arrived in America 15 years ago, he impressed friend and adversary alike with his ability to understand and operate in what is an alien environment for Arab diplomats, especially those from countries less than friendly to the West.

Today, these skills are used to promote Iraq's insistence that the United Nations curb its weapons' inspectors in Iraq. Nothing would please this diplomat more than to be able to promote another Iraqi objective: a substantive dialogue with the United States. But, so far, the Clinton administration has refused to talk about anything other than Iraq's obligation to destroy and then permit unfettered monitoring of its long-range missile, chemical and biological weapons capabilities.

Hamdoon, 53, and his wife, Sahar, came to Washington in 1983, at a time when Iraq and the United States began to improve relations. He soon built a reputation as an astute observer of the US political process. Hamdoon became known for his dinner parties—more seminars than parties. He would bring together junior officials who wrote the action memorandums and senior-level people who read them.

When Hamdoon left America in 1987 to become Iraq's deputy foreign minister, US-Iraqi relations were at a high point. When he came back, in 1993, Hamdoon moved to the only place in the United States where an Iraqi diplomat was allowed—New York.

As the UN representative of a defeated and, to many, reviled regime, Hamdoon struggled to re-establish credibility. Hamdoon made significant inroads in this new political culture. His most concrete achievement was the adoption of an "oil-for-food" program that allows Iraq, under UN supervision, to sell oil in exchange for humanitarian goods.

Hamdoon chatted in his fourth-floor study of the ambassador's residence, a large townhouse on Manhattan's fashionable Upper East Side, where the most immediate impression is of his love affair with American gadgets—two personal computers (IBM and Apple) and a giant-screen TV tuned to CNN.

How seriously do you take the US threat to employ military force against Iraq?

I think it's taken seriously. I have no question in my mind that the government back home does take it seriously.

Do you think they have an accurate assessment of the kind of military action the United States has in mind?

A: I think they do, given the immense amount of information that is coming out of Washington on the different aspects of the planned action against Iraq. They have a good idea of the nature of the attack, if it happens.

Do you think that the current flurry of diplomatic activity will be sufficient to prevent the kind of confrontation that you say your government understands?

This remains to be seen. I have to say that I really hope they produce something. And there is still a cushion of time to be used for whatever diplomatic initiatives we are currently involved in. The Russians, the French now are coming in. The Turks also, and some signs that Baghdad is going to try to make some initiatives.

Have you been disappointed at the level of support you have received from the French in recent days?

I think that given French policies worldwide and their special relations with the United States, they are obviously sensitive to whatever American foreign policy is, especially when it carries the weight this one does for the US. But I still think the essence of the French position is against the use of force...though there is a milder tone toward the American policy in recent days. But we in Iraq are hopeful that the French will continue to distance themselves from any future military attack by the United States.

Is Russian behavior pretty much what you expected?

A: I think there is a good level of confidence in the Russian initiatives. There is a feeling in Baghdad that the Russians are genuine in trying to find a peaceful solution to the problem...which will accommodate both the Iraqi and American point of view.

But if these efforts fail, do you believe you are facing in the United States today an adversary that is stronger or weaker than in the past?

On the military level, obviously, the US by far is stronger than it was seven years ago, given the ongoing development of its weaponry—which some credit should be given to Iraq, since the experience the US had with Iraq allowed them to improve many of their weapons. But on the political and moral level, so to speak, I think there are fewer people than back in 1991 supporting a military buildup and for the use of a military buildup for dealing with Iraq in a hostile manner.

How do you assess the level of support for the United States in the Arab world? Or put another way, how do you assess the level of Arab support for Iraq today?

I think it is clear that support for Iraq right now is significantly different and more solid than it was back in 1991, given the change in circumstances and the suffering of the Iraqi people and given other factors that relate to the peace process—where the US has really lost confidence, both from the Arab people and on the government level.

Q: Do you think the failure of the Arab-Israeli peace process has enhanced Iraq's position?

I think that the continuous failure to move the peace process and the reluctance of the United States to apply enough pressure on Netanyahu's government to concede what has been agreed upon previously with the Palestinians exposes the United States to the Arab people at large that there is this biased policy. When it comes to Israel, America is not going to apply pressure; when it

Middle East Beat
by Khairi Janbek
Final showdown?

THE MASS media organs are out again, to make a fortune from the looming war in the Gulf once again. Various scenarios are being drawn for the assumed final curtains for President Saddam.

Armchair theorists and café strategists have already sealed the doomed fate of the Iraqi regime. The irony of this particular issue, just as it was in 1991, and before in the case of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, we seem to wait (all of us in the Arab world) for the inevitable to happen, with the excitement of an audience awaiting a long overdue performance. What can we do otherwise? Well, sit and be exactly that audience.

Of course we cannot stand up to the might of America, but then again, we are too busy vocalising about standing, to be able to do so. Some of us have started looking towards, dividends being cashed in, on the Palestinian-Israeli peace track, because supposedly, the US needs some kind of a positive distraction in order to ease the misgivings in the Arab camp. But even on this point, let us remember that, Mr. Netanyahu could not deliver his part of the Oslo deal, even if he wanted to, without having his partners in the coalition voting against him.

Perhaps Mr. Barak ought to be approached and convinced to vote for Mr. Netanyahu's proposals for withdrawal of Israeli troops, and create a majority in Knesset. That would show Israeli goodwill without threatening the status of Mr. Netanyahu. Of course, that would make Mr. Barak a great peace contributor, but may not present him as a viable alternative to the current government.

Apart from the dividend seekers, we have the damage limitationists, who are viewing the crisis in the Gulf with the relativity of fire-power.

In other words, their logic is that, it is hoped that, the next attack will be limited to missiles and bombs, without any commitment of ground troops, because the success of such ground troops in achieving their objectives is dangerous enough for the whole region, let alone if they fail. Therefore, if the attack on Iraq is a *fait accompli*, then we are invited to watch the fireworks, and pray that there will not be plenty of casualties.

All in all, we seem to be awaiting the big blow without being able to do anything about it. The legalists and diplomatically minded among us, concentrate less on the images of the military build-up in the Gulf, and more on the words of Mr. Kofi Annan, and the diplomatic initiatives of the Russians, Turks and French, to reach a diplomatic conclusion to the crisis, which almost everyone has forgotten now, in the heat of the anticipated action, why it had all started in the first place? Admittedly, they have the most difficult task under the circumstances, and their contradictory statements are often reflected, in the contradictory headlines of even over newspapers. Secretary Albright is carrying the carrot on one mission and secretary Cohen is carrying the stick on another.

Most probably, there will not be complementarity between the two missions, for ultimately, the choice is likely to be, between the carrot and the stick, and whoever threatens louder and longer is likely to carry the day. Regardless, Iraq is bracing itself for the coming assault, and in Jordan, must brace ourselves for all eventualities.

It is now, more than ever, that our friends are needed to translate their friendship into deeds in dealing with constraints, on the already overstretched resources of our country.

Isn't it time now, that all of us as Arabs, start looking towards loving each other, and standing by each other, especially now that, Iraq may prove to be the sacrificial lamb of our unity?

A view from America

Can Hillary be stronger than smoke?

By Carrie Nelle Moye

Star US Correspondent

PUT THE two truisms together: "An individual is innocent until proven guilty." "Where there's smoke, there's fire." A third reality must be considered:

usually it is not the fire that kills; it is the smoke. And thus we must ask ourselves: no matter Clinton's guilt or innocence, will the damage from the smoke be so great that his presidency is destroyed no matter the final outcome?

Until January 27, it seemed this was a strong probability. But two things happened that day: Hillary Clinton gave an in-depth interview on NBC's Today show and President Clinton delivered his State of the Union address. The latter was not too much of a surprise. Even his enemies concede that Clinton appears to be able to compartmentalize his life and perform well under stress. He has that unique ability to put aside one matter and focus on another.

And of course he is a politician's politician when addressing the public. Nevertheless, pundits had not been certain just how effective his talk would be.

There was a heavy cloud of doubt, and speculation that he would be unable to push aside the image of his alleged sexcapades. But he managed to do so, at least for the hour and 15 minutes that he spoke.

The big surprise—and perhaps the one that will sustain the Clinton presidency—was the interview given by the First Lady. We all have known from day one that she has the reputation of being among the finest lawyers the United States has produced. After all, she was named twice by the American Bar Association as the Outstanding Attorney of the Year. If there were any doubt as to why, it was erased by her interview.

First, Mrs. Clinton presented two fronts, that as wife of the President and that as his legal defender. When the show's host Matt Lauer asked her if it were true that she was leading her husband's defense, she responded in the affirmative noting that after all she is an attorney, she is the closest person in

the world to her husband, she knows the facts, she believes him and that with these qualifications she is the logical one to direct his defense. She did not once hesitate or beat around the proverbial bush in any way. She was straight forward and gave succinct

The most common reply is that he was elected President, not she. But we all were told from the onset of the campaign that it was a two-for-one proposition.

I have never understood why that concept would upset anyone anyway. What Presidential spouse has not influenced her husband? Obviously some have been more overt about it than others, but certainly we all know it has happened.

And as politics, education and equality become more sophisticated, this influence will become more pronounced. Anyone who believes that our law-makers are not greatly influenced by their loved ones has her/his head in the sand.

Frankly, I am glad—even relieved—Hillary Clinton is for all practical purposes our co-President. Her detractors say she is loud. Read that strong. Her detractors felt she had no business trying to head the first-term doomed health care program.

Why not? She had been one of the most successful women in every endeavor she had undertaken at that time. How appropriate that she be put in charge of one of the most important of all tasks of the White House. The truly sad thing is that most likely it was rejected purely because she was placed in charge.

Jealousy abounded. She was not filling the role of the demure little wife, whispering the answers to a la Nancy Reagan when questions were asked of her husband. (Hillary did not have to, but that's beside the point.)

Hillary Clinton's intellect and talent are a great asset to this nation and we are foolish, nay stupid, in attempting to relegate her to the role of hostess spouse. Now she will most likely have to channel her enormous abilities in defending her husband and therefore the nation. But maybe that is the most important task facing us at this time. It promises to be a very interesting and most, most crucial—scenario.

And then there is the question as to wouldn't it be wonderful to have a friend like Linda Tripp. But that's another column.



answers. If I were between a rock and a hard place, I surely would want her to lead my defense.

All this brings me back to the furor surrounding the role of Hillary Rodham Clinton from the time the President was elected his first term. People either loved her or hated her. And they still feel that way. What puzzles me most is why she is resented so deeply. When people make jokes or, worse, express loathing of her, I ask why. I request they give specific reasons for this deep dislike.

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Letters to the editor: Will be edited for brevity, must contain name and address of sender.

Handwritten signature or mark at the bottom of the page.

Business scene

■ The Jordanian Exporters Society is presently busy organizing for the first show of Jordanian industrial products due to open in Gaza by the end of next April.

The show seeks to promote Jordanian goods and enhance their presence in the Palestinian market. As well, the event will help boost trade ties between Jordanian manufacturers and their Palestinian counterparts.

A media campaign will be launched in advance to promote the show in Palestinian newspapers besides distributing booklets on the expo in Gaza.

The trade balance between Jordan and the National Authority (ANA) is in favor of the latter. Jordanian exports to Palestine since the beginning of 1997 and till the end of November reached JD 10.7 million, while imports from the PNA totalled JD 21.7 million in the same year.

■ The Jordan Electric Power Co. and the Islamic Bank of Jordan have signed an agreement worth JD 10 million. Under the agreement, the Islamic Bank of Jordan will provide finance for the EPC's purchases upon the guarantee of the company's assets. The agreement is subject to the Murabahah system, which is one of the Islamic banking tools for finance and investment. So far the Islamic Bank of Jordan has signed a JD 70 million agreement with the company since 1986.

■ The tourism sector in Jordan recorded a 2.5 percent growth last year compared with 1996. Revenues from tourism reached \$775 million, Minister of Tourism Aqel Beltaji said. The number of tourists who visited Jordan last year totalled 1.127 million.

■ The ratio of non-Jordanian share in the capitals of shareholding companies by the end of last November was 38.27% compared with 32.43% in October and 32.80% in the end of 1996. The monthly statistics of the Amman Financial Market revealed that non-Jordanian share in the banking and financial sector recorded a growth in the same month from 47.72 in 1996 to 52.67. However, foreign stake in the services sector dropped below 8% against 8.6% in 1996. The size of non-Jordanian investments in 1997 was nearly JD 57 million.

Foreign Exchange

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US \$	0.7880	0.7180
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
SFR	0.4881	0.4825
FRF	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEL	0.3667	0.3685
ITT (100)	0.0419	0.0421

Islamic International Arab Bank launches its banking services

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

THE ISLAMIC International Arab Bank (IIAB) began its banking services on Monday in four branches in addition to the head office. However as banking services disclosed, the official opening of the bank, whose chairman is Mr Khalid Shoman, is expected to be announced by the end of the month.

The bank will offer diverse banking activities as well as covering a wide scope of financing and investment aspects, all run on the basis of Islamic Sharia law.

IIAB's General Manager Jamil Dasouki said the newly established bank is a separate entity. "It is a public shareholding company which is totally owned by the Arab Bank," its capital is JD 40 million, which is equivalent to \$56.5 million.

Referring to the nature and forms of services covered by the bank's operations and services, Mr Dasouki said the bank, which is registered in Jordan, deals with all transactions according to Sharia law.

The IIAB will accept all kinds of deposits such as current accounts, common investment accounts (savings, notice and fixed deposit accounts) as well



Mr Dasouki

as special investment accounts. "Also it will deal with Islamic financing tools such as Mudaraba, Murabahah, Musharaka, Ijara, Salan, Istisna'a and other tools."

Such forms of banking operations started in the head office in Wasfi Al Tal street (formerly Gardens) together with one branch in the same building. Presently, it is offering its services through a staff which comprises approximately 130 employees.

This is in addition to branches in downtown Amman (Quraysh street), Wihdat (Yarmouk Street), and Irbid (Bagh-



dad Street).

The bank, which received official approval to operate last October, plans to open three more branches this year to be located in the Kingdom's main cities.

Mr Dasouki has a 40-year

banking experience. He was an executive regional manager in the Arab Bank and has served in many posts in the bank's branches and general offices.

He said the bank's name is significant because it signals many aspects. Above all, it shows that the new entity is supported and backed by the Arab Bank. In addition it is working according to Sharia law. And finally, the IIAB shall have local, regional and international presence, a fact that can help establish a sound base for pure Islamic banking system.

The Sharia principles, according to which the IIAB is operating, are also similar to those implemented by the Jordan Islamic Bank, which was

the sole Islamic bank in the Kingdom.

With two Islamic banks in Jordan, this could be seen as a positive step to improve the performance of the local banking sector.

Commenting on the possibility of bridging cooperation and co-ordination between the two entities, Mr Dasouki said "The Sharia principles are the same, but what is different is the way of implementing these principles."

However, he said the existence of more than one Islamic bank is a healthy sign. "It creates competition, improves tools for financing and enhances returns to investors," Mr Dasouki said.

Holding companies in full swing

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Civil Aviation Authority approves its five-year plan

AMMAN (Star)—The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has approved its five-year scheme for 1998-2002, which is targeted at enhancing performance of air transportation and civil aviation to cope with latest world-wide developments.

The CAA is seeking to conclude bilateral agreements with countries to launch regular service to Jordan. So far there are 27 international companies operating regular flights to Jordan.

The development plan stresses the need to provide airports with facilities in order to offer the best services for passengers using Jordanian airports and meet future requirements.

Also CAA's scheme seeks to enhance productivity and achieve a higher revenue by encouraging investment projects that could generate satisfactory yield or profit.

The technical cadres in addition should be rehabilitated and the working staff must be fully acquainted with latest regulations relating to aviation systems.

Total value of the five-year plan stands at JD 63 million, including JD 29,910,000 to

modernize the Queen Alia International Airport. Moreover JD 3,050,000 are allocated for modernizing investment sites in Amman Civil Airport in order to boost the competence of the equipments and offer top and high quality service.

Aqaba International Airport, also has a share in the plan, a sum of JD 8,400,000 is supposed to help in expanding passengers' terminals and improve services, besides modernizing water networks.

Other objectives behind the

plan involve modernization and maintenance for the airport equipment and facilities, separating the arrivals and departure terminals, reducing operational costs, modernizing computer networks, telecommunications and TV monitoring systems.

In addition, the plan focuses on improving inspection systems of passengers and luggage, fire-extinguishing instruments and passports checking measures.

A Draft Law to protect national output

AMMAN (Star)—The Ministry of Industry and Trade has prepared a draft law on the Protection of National Production which will be implemented on imported goods that have similar local products in Jordan. The main objective behind this draft law is to protect domestic products against competition or possible dumping from outside products that could be subsidized in their countries of origin.

It involves a series of measures embarked on to achieve such target, such as imposing or increasing customs tariffs on imported items and cancelling or reducing tariffs on other goods. Also, the draft law underlines the limits of the volume of imports. The draft law has been submitted to the legal committee in the Lower House for discussion.

Jakarta to introduce new bankruptcy law

By Peter Montagnon

INDONESIA SAID this week that it was moving swiftly to set up a new bankruptcy law as part of procedures to help deal with its \$73bn private sector foreign debt.

The announcement by President Suharto's debt adviser, Radius Prawiro, is likely to please foreign creditors who have been hampered by the lack of procedures allowing them to foreclose loans and attach the assets of companies unable to pay their debts.

In his statement, Mr Prawiro also published a new estimate of the country's total debt, putting it at \$137bn, of which it said \$74bn was owed by the private sector.

The government would not ride to the rescue of the private sector, he said. Companies which are unable to service their debts within the rescheduling framework set by Indonesia's debt negotiating team will have to settle their debts through the new bankruptcy procedures.

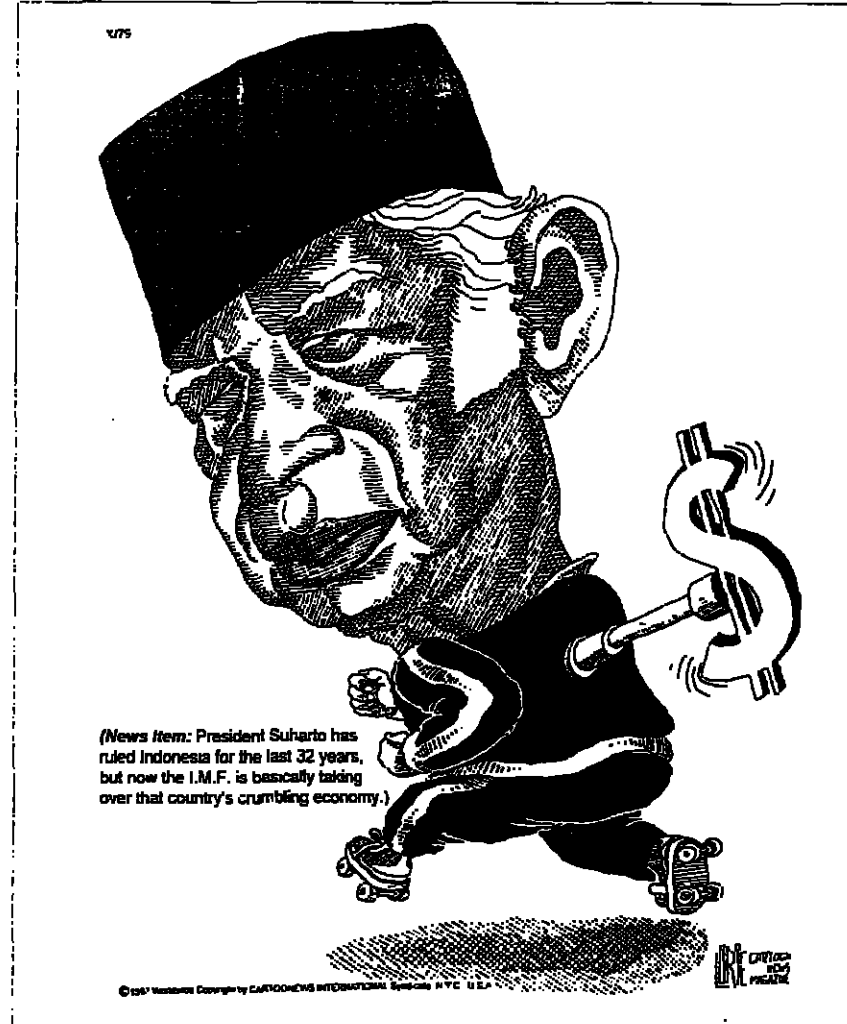
"There will be no guarantee, no bail-out and no government involvement in the corporate debt,"

Although Indonesia has rejected the use of exchange rate guarantees to help reschedule private sector debt along lines used by Mexico in the 1980s, bankers say the introduction of a currency board which would fix the exchange rate at a higher level could help alleviate the problem.

Expectations that Indonesia may adopt this solution have risen following a visit to Jakarta by Steve Hanke, a US expert on currency boards who briefed President Suharto on the issue during a long meeting earlier this week.

Stabilising the currency at a level around Rp5,000 to the US dollar, which was the reference rate in the recent budget, would still leave many companies facing problems but it would reduce the cost of recapitalising the private sector, said Manu Bhaskaran of Soc-Gen Crosby in Singapore.

Considerable concern remains, however, about the willingness of Japanese banks, which are the largest single group of lenders, to go along with rescheduling arrange-



(News Item: President Suharto has ruled Indonesia for the last 32 years, but now the IMF is basically taking over that country's crumbling economy.)

ments on Indonesian private sector foreign debt.

One constraint, bankers say, is the high rates the Japanese banks must pay for dollar deposits in the international money markets, which makes it harder for them to fund international lending.

There have been signs that this pressure has made some Japanese banks, which held out for guarantees from the Korean government on that country's foreign debt, reluctant to roll over short-term loans to Thailand in recent weeks.

Financial Times Syndication

MARKET WATCH 7-10 FEBRUARY

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<p>↑ 5.45 ↓ 4.10 ↓ 4.14</p> <p>↑ 5.05 ↓ 4.85 ↓ 4.72</p>	<p>↑ 5.11 ↓ 5.00 ↓ 4.97</p> <p>↑ 5.36 ↓ 4.76 ↓ 4.69</p>	<p>↑ 4.93 ↓ 4.17 ↓ 3.36</p> <p>↑ 5.66 ↓ 5.19 ↓ 5.00</p>	<p>↑ 5.36 ↓ 5.14 ↓ 2.70</p> <p>↑ 6.00 ↓ 5.33 ↓ 5.31</p>
General Price Pointer: 166,080	166,640	166,760	166,440
Trade Volume: 1635531	1489052	1729838	573415
Stock Volume: 1303599	807077	814138	542532
Highest Traded Stocks: 380713	199425	561780	130400

All data provided by ACCESS Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949

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AROUND TOWN



© HRH Princess Basma distributed awards Monday to the 52 students who won the 1997 Hashemite Competition for Health and Solidarity (HCHS) and voiced appreciation of the various organizations and schools that contributed to the success of the competition's charity campaign.



The pop idol phenomenon in Amman

THE THIRD Arab Song Festival will be remembered as one of the biggest staged-managed events by the Orbit television network. However, it didn't come without its mishaps, although most of these were probably not the fault of the satellite TV station.

One of the casualties was singer Raghib Alama. He was shot in the right thigh by an admirer just as he was making his way to the Meridien Hotel (formerly Forte Grand) after he gave a concert at the Palace of Culture. Luckily, the Lebanese singer only suffered minor scratches.

But this episode reveals potentially disturbing changes in the Arab psyche. The man who shot at Raghib was not only an admirer, but somebody who was obsessed with what is called as pop idol craze. He has been following him and his concerts in Amman for the past four years. The singer gave a description of the man and said that he was even photographed with him.

The pop idol phenomenon has been developing in the last few years in the Arab world. Largely, a western import, this phenomenon is now part and parcel of the way young people view things in this part of the world.

The shooting incident was extreme to say the least, but time and again concerts are revealing more than we care to admit in our every day life. "Letting things go," or "losing our inhibitions," are two dominating attitudes found among young people, both males and females.

During the Ragheb concert, whose tickets rose to \$150 dollars on the black market, quite a few people just walked up on stage to shake his hands or whatever. This was repeated during the concert of Kathim Al Saher. In one case, a young woman walked up to him and just allowed herself to fall in his arms. In separate cases, young men walked up to him, shook his hands and kissed him on both cheeks.

Nothing wrong with that people might say, which is fair enough. However, in other cases, you can feel that there was a fair amount of pretentiousness coming from the audience. During the Raghib concert young girls would hold out their hands and squeal, reduced to tears, as if Raghib was the man of their dreams.

Were they doing it for the cameras, or was it more deeper than that? Young tiny poppers, to use a quaint old phrase, freaked out before, especially during the Jeresh festivals. So it can be argued that this is a long-term trend, one that is likely to affect the cultural content of our society.

And in this regard, somebody told me the other day, that he heard people saying that the shooting of Raghib Alama was directly related to what the stars, girls and celebrities wore on the night or early hours of the incident. However, how he had made the connection, I'll never know.

Marwan Asmar

Orbit concerts in Amman rock audience from feet upwards

By Marwan Asmar
Star Staff Writer

It is certainly an event that will be remembered for a long, long time. At times, the crowd were jumping out of their seats, dancing in the aisles, singing, clapping and frolicking in a good natured way. The latest Orbit bonanza proved well worth watching, bringing singers from all over the world on four nights of merry-making.

The Third Arab Song Festival kicked off its shoes by bringing the glitter of show business under one roof. Masses of people braved the bitter cold and came out for the evenings of enchantment with the stars.

The hosts of the event were the Syrian-born actress Suzanne Nijm Al Din, actors Hussein Fahmi and Farouq Al Fishawi who were especially flown from Egypt to attend. On all these nights, Suzanne dazzled the audience, not only by her looks, but by the different open-cut costumes she wore.

With different orchestras in the background, that changed with the singers, the show riveted the audience. The first to start was Lutfi Bushnaq. In a word, his singing was simply memorable. By his *Oud*, the Tunisian-born singer took the audience down memory lane. His songs represent what is exquisitely traditional. With a powerful voice that puts him on par with the most judicious classical singers in the Arab world, Bushnaq swayed the audience to his kind of music.

And it worked. Through his rhythmic vocal chords, right tempo and resonance, he was able to fill the huge especially-designed orbit stage. The highs and lows in his voice were made to a perfect touch.

It was to the Orbit network that credit must be due. Their organization was meticulous. The sound-ing systems, powerful amplifiers and speakers situated in the different areas of the auditorium made all the difference.

And their skill, which included the stage management, and lighting, never wavered. During the performances of both Najwa Karam and Ragheb Alama, the Orbit cameras were there, careful not to miss anything that was being said and done.

With at least seven cameras in action, the organizers made sure that they didn't miss a single shot, concentrating both on the singer and the audience.

During her performance Najwa came on with a mesmerizing green dress and an open bodice that sent the most sedate to a frenzy of commotion.

One member of the audience said that "Najwa sparkles where ever she goes, and indeed this is what happened." Although her songs seemed to be known by heart, they never tired. *Ma hasmilk*, for instance, is fresh and original as the day she first sang it.

On the second day of the festival, the audience were introduced to the second batch of stars. Topping the bill was Sabah Fakhri, who as usual sang to his heart's content. One of the classics, Sabah Fakhri is an old favorite among the audiences in



Jordan, having come here on many occasions.

He was followed by Diana Haddad and George Wasoof who literally brought the house down with their melodies. George Wasoof, in a slick business-man-style suit came on stage and just began to dish out the songs that he was most famous for, and all in front of the eyes of the cameras which were beaming his concert live on satellite television.

In this respect too, the concept of technical wizardry was the order of the day. The professional staff were on full alert. With a team of professionals, one particular man on the floor caught the attention of many.

Strapped with a camera in front of him, all he did throughout the four nights was walk the auditorium, starting from the stage, going all the way to the aisles and waiting for the right shot from the audience, he would do that time and again, it was as if he was on skates.

What was even more interesting was the fact that he had a sort of a "shadow" closely behind him, a man who carried a cable tied to the camera.

This other man would do exactly what the front one did. If he ran the "shadow" would run, if he knelt on his knees, the "shadow" would follow, turning around, moving backwards, run up and down, the split second timing was very interesting. Because the concerts were being broadcast live on satellite, the aim was to convey a dynamic atmosphere, one that is full of interaction between the singers and the audience.

And they more than found what they bargained in the third night. Local talent Omar Al Abdallat truly rocked the audience senseless. It was no stop action. His concert which

many said should have been longer, was an event that will stay in the minds of people for a very long time.

He was like a bulldozer, from the word go, the audience went into a frenzy. By the time he started to sing *Bas Ana wal Oud* of *Thalethna Al Qamar*, the audience were already geared up. It was as if the whole auditorium was one big music box with people jumping in their seats.

Looking from a distance, all one saw was waving hands with tufts of group dancers.

It was amazing, one couldn't help move with the beat as it were. In fact, this is what happened with quite a few of the opposite sex. One girl in particular just stood up and started to flow, or is it bogy? Like the rest of the rockin' rollers, if they can be called that, it was all systems go as far as she was concerned. It was as if there were nobody there, just her and the singer.

But this one was just among the very many. It was hard for the rest of the journalists to keep their pens from going haywire, looking and writing, looking and writing, looking and writing, one hour of entertainment both from Omar Al Abdallat and the audience.

It was also a very good hour for the camera-strapped man and his shadow. However, all this reached a bit of an anti-climax during the performance of the next singer.

The Tunisian Thikra didn't prove to be a great hit with the audience. Although she had the strong voice and the intonation, there was very little interaction, and at certain times boredom set in, but that quickly changed during the performance of Hani Shaker, who again gave the audience what they were looking for in entertainment.

But this is what the Arab Song Festival is all about. The aim is to build a bridge across the Arab world, which singers are serving to cement.

The last day of the show was dominated by Wardat Al Jazairiyya and Kathim Al Saher. It would be meaningless to try and pontificate. The two singers speak for themselves.

One thing is certain, however, the annual festival, thanks to Orbit, is slowly becoming part of the Arab world's cultural agenda which is likely to



SCRAPBOOK

By Christian Doumit

In praise of older women

JANUARY IS the cruelest month where sex and Americans are concerned. An American president in office gives a five-hour videotaped deposition and is cross-examined by lawyers before a judge about his sexual habits, in connection with accusations of impropriety by Ms Paula Jones. Such a self-professed feminist like Ms Jones can't escape the consequences of such drum-beating. Had she been more reasonable, Ms Jones would have called an oaf an oaf instead of running to lawyers and the press whining about sexual harassment. Ms Jones may have been the subject of uncouth remarks—assuming that her allegations are true—but in no way was she in physical danger or forced to give in to sex against her will. Unfortunately, such are the inadequacies of the law, that one can't be taken to court for bad manners, or perhaps this is a good thing as it would put behind bars 90 percent of the population.

Such allegations affecting the US president would be unthinkable on the other side of the Atlantic, where sex and the portrayals of it are celebrated with gusto. In France, men and women go about their *cing a sept*, (illicit liaisons between 5 and 7 pm) and everyone is opposed to itemized phone bills because of the peccadilloes they might reveal. To Frenchmen, Italians and Spaniards, sex is an elaborate *spiel*, in which the male pursues and the female resists. Getting under the sheets is secondary. Frenchmen believe that not to try is an insult to a woman. And so do women. Romantic men will flirt with women they find attractive. No such nonsense as "Can anything be done about flirts" (*The Star*, 28 January) with the writer using big words such as honor, purity and Islamic morals just because a boy is trying to talk to a girl in a bus.

Now to Europe and Paris which Papa Hemingway called "that old mistress in search of young lovers." The late French President Francois Mitterand has had mistresses throughout his life. This did not prevent his wife, his mistress, their illegitimate daughter and the First Dog to be together at his funeral. When recently asked by a journalist if he were not using his position to keep a younger woman, the Italian Foreign Minister replied: "Of course I am. I am old, bald, ugly and fat. Do you think any young woman would be interested in me for my looks?" Indeed, in most civilized countries, having a mistress is a natural state of affairs. Show me a famous and successful man anywhere and I'll show you a mistress in the background. South African surgeon Christian Barnard, who became a celebrity following the world's first heart transplant, is just one example. When I lived in Paris in the '70s every one I knew kept *une reguliere*. In Canada, both Pierre Trudeau and Lester B. Pearson have had mistresses. While Trudeau's affair ended in divorce, Pearson was awarded the Nobel peace prize and later became Prime Minister. It's only in America where having a mistress is like having the bubonic plague.

But this is not all. Just like the Gaynor Regan revelations concerning British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and his dalliance with a younger woman were designed by political opponents, the Lewinsky affair appears to be politically motivated by a bunch of hater, twisted and jealous creatures with low testosterone count. No gentleman should speak ill of a lady. Even though she might have entertained some fantasies about her commander-in-chief, the tarnishing of Monica Lewinsky's reputation is a despicable act.

Forty years ago the British Cabinet had to resign in a wake of the Profumo sex scandal. But then the circumstances were different. The lady-in-question was making *zizi ponpon* with both the British war secretary and the Russian naval officer attached to the Soviet Embassy in London. I still remember a joke going around at the time: "Why is Christine Keeler a bad carpenter?" Answer: "One wrong screw and the cabinet falls apart."

If older women are feeling distressed about middle-aged men lusting after young flesh, "Cheer up" says Julie Burchill, a British columnist, "both being bad at sex, they leave the field free for old women and young men who are both really good at it, to go after each other." Not quite. At 38 you are not old enough, and I won't come to your swimming pool Julie! You come to me, to Wadi Rum in late spring and I will show you what we can do under the stars.

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



Indispensable workers on any porcine ranch, these amazing dogs will sometimes run across the backs of their charges.



عزاد النور

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Les sceaux, des œuvres d'art miniatures par Véronique Abu-Nijmeh

Le sceau, cachet gravé propre à laisser son empreinte dans un support mou, en général l'argile, est une invention orientale très ancienne que nous livre pour la première fois l'Asie mineure au VI^e millénaire av. J.C. Au millénaire suivant, la technique se développe en Mésopotamie et l'on voit apparaître à la fin du IV^e millénaire le sceau cylindrique en pierres qui se répand rapidement dans la région de Syrie-Palestine. Les sceaux étaient apposés sur les tablettes de contrat, les lettres, les ballots de marchandises, les vases contenant des objets précieux, les jarres utilisées pour le transport de produits agricoles. Les sujets gravés sont d'une immense variété. Mais les objets ainsi scellés étaient en général placés sous la protection des dieux et appartenaient en majorité à des temples ou des palais. Aussi les scènes représentées sont souvent religieuses ou destinées à exalter la grandeur d'un souverain. Percés les sceaux pouvaient être portés en guise d'amulette et revêtaient alors un caractère prophylactique, ce qui explique leur présence dans les tombes.



Les sceaux sont l'une des richesses archéologiques du sol ammonite. Au nombre de 150 environ, ils ont largement contribué aux progrès de nos connaissances du passé transjordanien. Ils reflètent une tradition artistique locale, quoique fortement inspirée de l'art des pays voisins. Leur intérêt réside entre autres dans leurs inscriptions qui mentionnent dans de nombreux cas le nom du propriétaire ou la charge qu'il exerce. Outre la fonction de sceau, certains ont servi de monnaie. L'exemple proposé ci-contre provient de Tell El-Mazar au nord du territoire d'Ammon et date de la période perse (VI^e-V^e siècle av. J.C.). Il reproduit dans un style néo-babylonien une scène de culte surmontée d'une étoile, d'un croissant de lune et d'un soleil, etc. D'autres plus remarquables qu'elles sont miniatures, les représentations des sceaux s'élèvent souvent au rang d'œuvres d'art.

Interview

Samir Mutawi : «Je ne suis pas coupable»

Mal aimé du public, le ministre de l'information et porte-parole du gouvernement est attaqué de toutes parts. Il n'a jamais su convaincre des bienfaits de la loi provisoire sur la presse. Toujours placé en ligne de mire dans le gouvernement, Samir Mutawi se défend et répond à ses détracteurs.



Samir Mutawi, pour la première fois ministre avec le gouvernement Majali, n'a jamais suscité la sympathie.

Un beau soufflet au gouvernement. Le 26 janvier dernier, la Haute Cour de Justice jugeait inconstitutionnelle la loi provisoire sur la presse et les publications. De nombreux commentateurs ont qualifié cette décision d'historique en découvrant soudain l'indépendance du système judiciaire. L'un des juges qui a usé l'affront, estime pourtant que l'indépendance n'est pas une nouveauté et rapporte l'enthousiasme général à une divine surprise ou plus sérieusement à un avertissement au pouvoir sur le mode : «Ne refaites plus jamais ça. Maintenez il y a une cour qui veille». Pour prendre leur décision, les juges se sont appuyés sur l'article 94 de la Constitution selon lequel le gouverne-

ment peut promulguer des lois temporaires quand le Parlement est en vacances si les circonstances l'exigent et ne supportent aucun délai. La Haute Cour a considéré que la situation n'était pas aussi alarmante que le gouvernement le prétendait. La loi provisoire est en contradiction avec la Constitution. Par conséquent, est-il ajouté dans l'arrêt, «toutes les décisions fondées sur cette loi sont annulées».

La loi au Parlement

Treize hebdomadaires avaient été suspendus en septembre dernier parce qu'ils ne respectaient pas les conditions draconiennes des amendements provisoires. Al Majd et Sawt al-Marai étaient parvenus à régulariser leur situation bien avant la décision de justice. Celle-ci

vient en fait soulager les onze derniers hebdomadaires qui restaient encore fermés. En début de semaine, les chefs d'édition ont reçu le feu vert du Premier ministre pour reprendre le travail. D'ici quelques jours, le temps de remettre en route les rotatives et de dépoussiérer les bureaux, les élagages de journaux devraient être plus fournis.

«Après l'affaire Mecha'al, on m'a décerné une médaille»

Reste que la loi provisoire n'a pas dit son dernier mot. Son avenir est entre les mains du Parlement qui peut décider de la rejeter, de l'amender ou de l'adopter telle quelle. Dans ce dernier cas, la loi perdrait son caractère provisoire et donc ne tomberait plus sous le coup de l'arrêt des juges qui sont prononcés sur la forme et non sur le fond. «Le fond est de la responsabilité du Parlement», rappelle l'un d'eux.

C'est aussi l'une des mises au point effectuées par le ministre de l'information et porte-parole du gouvernement Samir Mutawi dans l'entretien qu'il nous a accordé. Défendu, il a accepté de répondre aux nombreuses attaques qu'il essuie depuis son arrivée dans le gouvernement de Abdul Salam Majali. Ce sexagénaire, ancien journaliste et animateur à la télévision de débats politiques, semble regretter ses anciennes amours et avoue que ses fonctions actuelles ne sont pas toujours faciles à assumer, surtout quand on lui fait jouer les mauvais rôles, comme dans l'affaire Mecha'al. Récemment encore,

le Premier ministre n'a pas pris la peine de le mettre au courant de ses intentions. Majali a préféré téléphoner directement au directeur du Département de la presse et des publications pour donner ses instructions et autoriser la reprise des journaux suspendus. Samir Mutawi, ministre de l'information, dernier informé.

Le Jourdain : Après la décision de la Haute Cour de Justice, ne pensez-vous pas que le gouvernement s'est trompé en promulguant cette loi provisoire sur la presse et les publications ?

Samir Mutawi : Pas du tout. Le gouvernement a des responsabilités envers la communauté jordanienne. Ces trois dernières années, les hebdomadaires publiaient des articles de manière irréfléchie provoquant des troubles dans la communauté, y compris au sein de l'ancien Parlement. Nous avons des enregistrements télévisés de députés demandant au gouvernement précédent d'amender la loi de la presse parce qu'elle permettait aux hebdomadaires de produire des articles sensationnels et sans fondement. Nous nous sommes donc sentis responsables de la protection de l'intérêt public, de nos relations avec les autres pays, de la réputation et de l'image de la Jordanie. Cela nécessitait d'amender la loi.

L. J. : Vous croyez toujours à cette loi provisoire ?

S. M. : À cet égard, nous n'avons aucun sentiment de culpabilité. Personnellement, je crois toujours à ces amendements qui me semblent importants. On a fait ce qu'on croyait être juste. Nous n'avons rien fait contre la liberté d'expression. Nous avons essayé de rendre la presse responsable au lieu de cet individualisme des journaux qui utilisent des moyens peu orthodoxes pour gagner de l'argent.

L. J. : De nombreux commentateurs reprochent au gouvernement d'avoir pris son temps pour appliquer la décision de justice.

S. M. : Je crois qu'il y a un malentendu sur la manière dont se passent les choses en Jordanie. Même quand on soumet au gouvernement une demande d'investissement, cela prend du temps. Les procédures sont longues et ce n'est pas typique à la Jordanie. Je le répète : le gouvernement n'a pas l'intention de retarder l'application de la décision de justice, ni de ne pas la respecter.

L. J. : Le gouvernement a-t-il l'intention de soumettre une loi du même genre au Parlement ?

S. M. : En fait, la loi provisoire, malgré la décision de la Haute Cour, doit continuer à être examinée par l'actuel Parlement. Rejeter, discuter, amender, c'est à lui de décider. Si le Parlement rejette la loi, le gouvernement ne peut rien faire car il lui faut attendre la prochaine session parlementaire pour présenter une nouvelle loi. Il est impossible aujourd'hui de parler des intentions du gouvernement.

L. J. : La loi sur la presse et les publications, l'affaire Mecha'al et récemment le scandale du festival de la chanson... Vous êtes attaqué de toutes parts. Que répondez-vous à ceux qui vous en veulent ?

S. M. : Concernant l'affaire Mecha'al, je voudrais dire que ceux qui m'ont critiqué ne comprennent pas le travail de communication. À l'époque j'ai réagi en ministre et non en journaliste. Je n'ai communiqué à la presse que les informations que me donnait la sécurité publique. Je ne pouvais pas faire de déclarations ou donner des explications supplémentaires à moins qu'on m'en eût autorisé. Je ne me suis pas trompé dans cette affaire (Samir Mutawi persistait à qualifier l'attentat contre le leader du Hamas de simple dispute entre des touristes canadiens et le chauffeur de Mecha'al, NDLR). D'ailleurs le roi Hussein a critiqué les journalistes qui m'avaient attaqué et l'on m'a décerné une médaille.

L. J. : Et comment réagissez-vous à l'attitude des députés qui ont déposé une motion contre vous en vous reprochant d'avoir autorisé la diffusion d'un festival de la chanson arabe pendant l'Aïd où l'on pouvait voir des femmes particulièrement dénudées ?

«Je crois toujours à cette loi provisoire»

S. M. : Il faut tout de suite préciser que cette motion, présentée au président de la Chambre, a été rejetée. Mais c'est tout à fait normal dans un pays démocratique et les parlementaires ont le droit de demander un vote de confiance sur n'importe quel sujet. Par ailleurs si l'occasion se représente, j'autoriserais à nouveau la diffusion de ce type de festival. Je ne cherche pas à défrayer les membres du Parlement. Je suis seulement motivé pour servir la Jordanie et promouvoir son image. Orbit, qui proposait cette manifestation, est d'origine saoudienne. Personnellement je suis heureux de développer nos relations avec ce pays. Je ne vois pas la différence entre ce festival et celui de Jérash. Quand j'ai donné mon accord à la télévision jordanienne, je n'ai pas pensé que cette décision pouvait être jugée si négativement. Certains estiment que j'ai eu tort. Ce n'est pas l'avis de ceux qui ont assisté au spectacle. ■

Propos recueillis par Nahed Al-Khlouf

Association

Les bonnes fées du village aux enfants

Samedi prochain, le concert du pianiste Philippe Giusiano sera donné au profit d'une association autrichienne, installée depuis plus de dix ans en Jordanie. Dans ses Villages, des orphelins sont pris en charge jusqu'à leur indépendance financière. Des mamans SOS veillent sur eux comme sur leurs propres enfants.

Pas de voitures, des arbres, des poules, des oies et un poulin dans un poulailler, des toboggans, des balançoires, des tournoquets, un espace de jeux

multicolore et des gros hommes souriants sur des murs peints. Nous y sommes : le paradis des enfants à quelques minutes du centre-ville

d'Amman, sur le mamelon de Tabarugh. Ce paradis protégé, c'est l'un des deux villages d'enfants SOS de Jordanie avec celui d'Aqaba. Mais il est presque midi et les enfants semblent avoir déserté leur éden. Ni cris, ni rires. Ils sont pourtant 111 à vivre sur cette aire idéale, répartis en douze foyers. En fait, les plus petits sont encore à babiller dans les classes impeccables de la maternelle du Village. Les plus grands ne rentrent qu'en début d'après-midi. Les mamans SOS profitent de ces instants de répit et se sont réunies chez l'une d'entre elles pour un cours d'anglais. «Elles doivent être capables d'aider les enfants qui reçoivent un enseignement où l'anglais est important», explique Amal Salem, l'une des responsables de l'association. Rien n'est inné au hasard dans l'éducation de tous ces gosses abandonnés ou dont les parents sont décédés. En collaboration avec le ministère du développement social, le Village prend en charge quelques-uns des 10.000 orphelins recueillis par les institutions publiques avec ce principe de base : ne pas séparer les frères et sœurs.

Des photos par milliers. Maman SOS, c'est peut-être d'abord un boulot avec un salaire (moyen) et des objectifs : que les enfants obtiennent les diplômes suffisants pour gagner leur indépendance. Sur les brochures d'information de l'association, ceux qui ont réussi apparaissent en photos-médailles, tels les trophées de mamans citées en exemple.

Réduire le travail de ces mères modèles à quelques marques de pure comptabilité sportive serait cependant leur faire injure. Bien entendu, elles développent des tonnes d'affection pour élever des enfants qui ne sont pas les leurs.



Dans les Villages d'Aqaba et d'Amman, 183 enfants s'épanouissent sous le regard de leurs mamans SOS.

Maman SOS c'est un métier à plein temps, quand la petite dernière fait ses dents la nuit, que le cadet de 10 de fièvre ou quand il faut intervenir dans les bagarres. Avec chacune neuf bambins à charge, ces mères au foyer ont peu de temps à elles. «Je sais que j'ai droit à des jours de congés mais je ne les prends jamais car je préfère rester avec mes enfants», déclare Hanan. «Maman» depuis 10 ans. Divorcée très jeune, elle a dû laisser sa fille à son mari. Aujourd'hui cette Palestinienne originaire de Jérusalem au foudard à damier n'imaginerait pas se remarier et trouve que l'absence d'un homme à la maison, si elle peut être préjudiciable aux enfants, n'est pas un mal. À part le directeur qui apporte une touche masculine au fonctionnement général, le village est sous le contrôle exclusif des

femmes : une véritable curiosité dans une société patriarcale. Quand le mari de Zakieh décide, elle est toujours sans enfants. Pour apaiser cette blessure éternelle, elle ose se présenter à l'association. Après trois mois de mise à l'épreuve, on lui accorde une des maisons du village. Aujourd'hui Zakieh a 52 ans et elle en est déjà à sa deuxième génération d'enfants. «Ce qui est le plus dur, confie-t-elle, c'est de les laisser partir à l'adolescence». À la puberté en effet, garçons et filles sont séparés et placés dans les foyers de jeunesse de l'association. Ils y seront suivis jusqu'à leur indépendance financière, même au-delà de leur majorité. Pendant ce temps, les mamans SOS adoptent tout simplement d'autres enfants en bas âge pour compléter le nu-

merus clausus. Et puis il y a les grands de passage qui ont pris leur envol mais reviennent de temps en temps prendre le thé avec leur mère adoptive ou montrer leur dernier-né. La promotion au statut de mamie SOS n'est pas plus compliquée que cela.

À peu de choses près, les maisonnettes du village enchanté sont toutes identiques. À l'intérieur, comme dans le conte de Boucle d'Or, les lits se comptent par trois, les lavabos sont de taille différente pour chaque âge et sur le mur de la salle de séjour, un immense panneau noyé de photos d'enfants en fête inspire une sérénité d'ange. Toute la vie des mamans SOS est là, dans cette farandole en pêle-mêle. ■

Yannick Lainé

Profession

Sénateur pour les expat'

Hubert Durand-Chastel était la semaine dernière en visite en Jordanie. Un sénateur à part puisqu'il représente au Palais de Luxembourg les intérêts des Français établis à l'étranger.

On imagine Hubert Durand-Chastel toujours entre deux correspondances, les poches intérieures de son costume gris-bleu bourrées de billets d'avion et on n'est pas loin de la vérité. Ce bourguignon bavard passe la moitié de son temps hors de France et réalise au moins deux tours du monde par an. Le vieil homme ne semble pas s'en lasser et avoue son goût éternel pour les voyages. À 80 ans, le sénateur n'en finit pas de se former. Après l'Indochine où il est nommé directeur des cimenteries pour les blockhaus du général de Lattre de Tassigny, il s'embarque pour le Mexique. Il y restera 37 ans comme directeur général d'une société de produits chimiques. Parallèlement, Hubert Durand-Chastel n'oublie pas ses racines et s'investit pour défendre ses intérêts et ceux des Français qui comme lui ont choisi l'expatriation. Pendant 20 ans, il devient donc l'un des 150 députés du Conseil supérieur des Français établis à l'étranger. Élus tous les 6 ans dans les 48 circonscriptions du monde (sauf bien sûr la France et les DOM-TOM).

«Un système enviable» La voie est royale pour obtenir un siège au Sénat. Ce sont les députés qui élisent les 12 sénateurs qui représenteront au Parlement les Français de l'étranger et ils sont généralement choisis au sein du Conseil supérieur. Tout naturellement Hubert Durand-Chastel accède au Palais de Luxembourg en 1990. Sans étiquette politique, il admet pourtant appartenir à la majorité conservatrice du Sénat. Mais il ajoute aussitôt qu'il lui arrive de faire des propositions communes avec ses collègues socialistes. Finalement, même s'ils ont les mêmes droits et devoirs que les autres sénateurs, ces douze-là sont une race à part, le regard le plus souvent tourné vers

l'hexagone. Ils se partagent le monde en fonction de leurs affinités et partent à la rencontre des 1,7 millions de Français qui vivent à l'étranger. Après le Koweït et l'Iran, la Jordanie dernière il était en Jordanie qui compte une communauté française d'à peine 700 personnes. Quelques-uns ont pu s'entretenir avec lui et exprimer leurs inquiétudes et leurs tracasseries administratives. «La plupart des questions concernent la scolarité des enfants ou la sécurité sociale», explique le sénateur aux cheveux blancs habitué de ce genre d'entrevues. De retour en France, il se chargera de faire avancer un dossier difficile dans telle ou telle administration. De l'étranger, les démarches ne sont en effet pas toujours faciles à réaliser. Les douze sénateurs ont surtout à cœur de défendre auprès du gouvernement des revendications généralisées afin d'améliorer la situation des Français. Ils peuvent le faire par l'intermédiaire d'une proposition de loi au Sénat ou par la voix du Conseil supérieur des Français de l'étranger. «Chaque année le Conseil, qui est consultatif, soumet 100 à 150 vœux au gouvernement», assure Hubert Durand-Chastel. Le Bourguignon se félicite ainsi que les Français établis à l'étranger bénéficient d'un système de sécurité sociale presque aussi performant que s'ils étaient restés en France. «Ce système de représentation nous est enviable par beaucoup de pays», affirme encore Hubert Durand-Chastel. Pas de doute pour notre sénateur globe-trotteur, branché sur internet à l'heure de la mondialisation, «il faut que les Français s'expatrient davantage». ■

Le Jourdain

C'est la vie

L'agenda culturel d'Amman

Concert

Né en 1973 à Marseille, c'est dans sa ville natale que Philippe Giusiano commence l'étude du piano à 5 ans. Il est à 17 ans le plus jeune lauréat du XI^e concours international Frédéric Chopin de Varsovie. Cinq ans plus tard en 1995, il se représente à ce prestigieux concours et remporte alors le deuxième Grand Prix. Cette récompense le fait désormais entrer dans le cercle très fermé des grands pianistes. Philippe Giusiano revient cette année en Jordanie pour offrir un récital qui ne sera pas uniquement centré sur Chopin mais qui inclura Ravel et Rachmaninoff. Le samedi 14 février à 20h00 au Centre culturel royal. Prix des places : 10 JD. Le concert est organisé au profit de SOS Villages d'enfants de Jordanie.



Exposition

C'est au XIX^e siècle que la bande dessinée devient autonome et adopte le support que nous lui connaissons : l'album imprimé. Après avoir été sous domination américaine puis belge, la BD française fait preuve dans les années 1960 et 1970 d'une formidable créativité. Cette période coïncide avec l'émergence d'un mouvement bedéphile qui milite pour la reconnaissance d'un 9^e art. Quelques bulles et planches pour vous présenter l'histoire de la bande dessinée en France. Au Centre culturel français jusqu'au 26 février. Renseignements au 637009.

Cinéma

Cycle consacré au réalisateur Éric Rohmer. Le rayon vert (1986), non sous-titré. Une jeune secrétaire d'une vingtaine d'années à la recherche du grand amour, erre de ville en ville pendant ses vacances. Lundi 16 février à 18h30 et 20h30 au CCF.

Paleontologist conducts big search for tiny dinosaur

By Douglas M. Birch

BALTIMORE—David B. Weishampel makes an annual trek to the mist-shrouded Carpathian mountains of Transylvania to hunt for the grave of a nasty character with a taste for blood.

But the Johns Hopkins University paleontologist, regarded by his colleagues as one of the world's top dinosaur scientists, leaves his wooden stakes at home. He isn't hunting for Count Dracula, the fictional vampire.

He's looking for the ancient bones of Romanian raptor, a meat-eating dinosaur whose incisors even the evil count might envy, along with a menagerie of other Cretaceous-era animals.

What he has helped to uncover is an oddity of natural history, a rare adaptation that could help confirm one aspect of Darwin's theory of evolution. Many of the region's dinosaurs, it seems, are dwarfs, anywhere from two-thirds to one-tenth the size of their counterparts elsewhere.

It is the only such community of miniature dinosaurs found anywhere on Earth, and it is probably related to the fact that the Carpathian mountains were once an island in the midst of an ancient ocean.

Weishampel thinks that some of the traits these animals developed in their island environment later proved extremely useful on the mainland—providing a rare example of how isolated populations can change the course of evolutionary history.

While digging up his dinosaurs, Weishampel also became intrigued by some of the Balkans' human ghosts.

Now, he's writing two books. One is a scholarly volume about dinosaurs. The other is a biography of Baron Franz Nopsca (pronounced Nobt-jah), a brilliant and troubled paleontologist who, around the turn of the century, first studied these long-extinct animals.

Weishampel, 45, who lives in Park-

ville, Md., talked about his work in his hook-crammed office, tucked in a corner of Hopkins' sprawling East Baltimore medical complex. A black-and-white oil portrait of Charles Darwin, painted by Weishampel, broods a few feet from his desk.

Around the turn of the century, Weishampel explains, North American paleontologists were racing around like cowboys, grabbing fossils and setting them up in museums. Baron Nopsca, by contrast, was less interested in rounding up the fossils than in figuring out what they said about the lives of the animals that owned them.

Nopsca's sister, Ilona, first found the fossils in 1895, while strolling on the family estate. The young baron himself, educated at the University of Vienna, began excavating and describing these extinct animals.

By careful study, Nopsca found evidence for the then-controversial notion that birds evolved from dinosaurs. Because he recognized how closely related his dinosaurs were to others found elsewhere in the world, he knew that the notion of continental drift, also controversial at the time, had to be true. Today, the theory is well-established.

He spent his life as an outsider. He was gay at a time when homosexuality was a crime in most places. And he dabbled in espionage, serving the Austro-Hungarian empire first in Albania and later in Romania during World War I.

After the world war, Nopsca lost his estate and the family fortune. In 1933, at the age of 55, he committed suicide.

Unfortunately for Nopsca, Transylvanian dinosaurs do not make striking museum exhibits: complete skeletons are rare. Most fossils consist of teeth and small shards of bone.

"His career was eclipsed by the great dinosaur discoveries of North America" in the early decades of this century, Weishampel says, when beautiful skeletons were unearthed. As a result, "his work

was pretty much ignored or trivialized."

A decade ago, Weishampel set out to study these bones. The first serious effort since Nopsca's death. He stepped out of the train in the Romanian city of Deva and into the gray and paranoid world created by Romania's notorious Communist dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu.

"It was grim, really grim," Weishampel says. "My basic feeling was people were looking at me with suspicion. I was a Westerner. I was bad. It was kind of scary."

It took some delicate negotiations to gain access to Nopsca's collection. Even then, people were leery or hostile.

Only after a coup ousted Ceausescu, executed on Christmas Day 1989, did attitudes change. Weishampel began field work with Romanian paleontologists in the summer of 1993.

Now, he says, "people are extremely friendly and open."

Even the dinosaurs are beginning to yield their secrets.

Seventy million years ago, Transylvania was a tropical island, part of an archipelago stretching from present-day Spain to present-day Azerbaijan. Dinosaurs were likely stranded there by shifting continents and changing sea levels.

Biologists have long noted that big animals, such as mammoths and hippos, tend to shrink after hundreds of generations on islands. Likewise, island life seems to spur some small animals, such as birds and lizards, to evolve into larger models.

Dinosaurs were, of course, very big — among the largest animals ever to stomp around. But the ones that roamed this ancient island were puny. Velociraptor was typically 6 to 8 feet in length. Romanian raptor was only about 4 feet long.

These changes in size and shape tend to be temporary. Traits evolved on islands typically prove useless on the mainland, and soon vanish. "They're almost literally dead-ends," Weishampel

says. But in Transylvania, he thinks he has found an important exception to this rule. It has to do with teeth.

Weishampel specializes in the study of duck-billed dinosaurs, plant-chewing animals that laid eggs and lived in herds. The early duck-bills that lived in Transylvania were small, only about 12 feet in length compared to their 30-foot mainland relatives.

As they shrank, so did their teeth. And a good thing, too. Those itty-bitty teeth, which grew in multiple rows, turned out to be a terrific tool for chomping the tough plants of the era.

When land bridges appeared, and the Transylvanian dinosaurs moved back to North America and Asia, they regained their former size. But they also retained those tiny teeth.

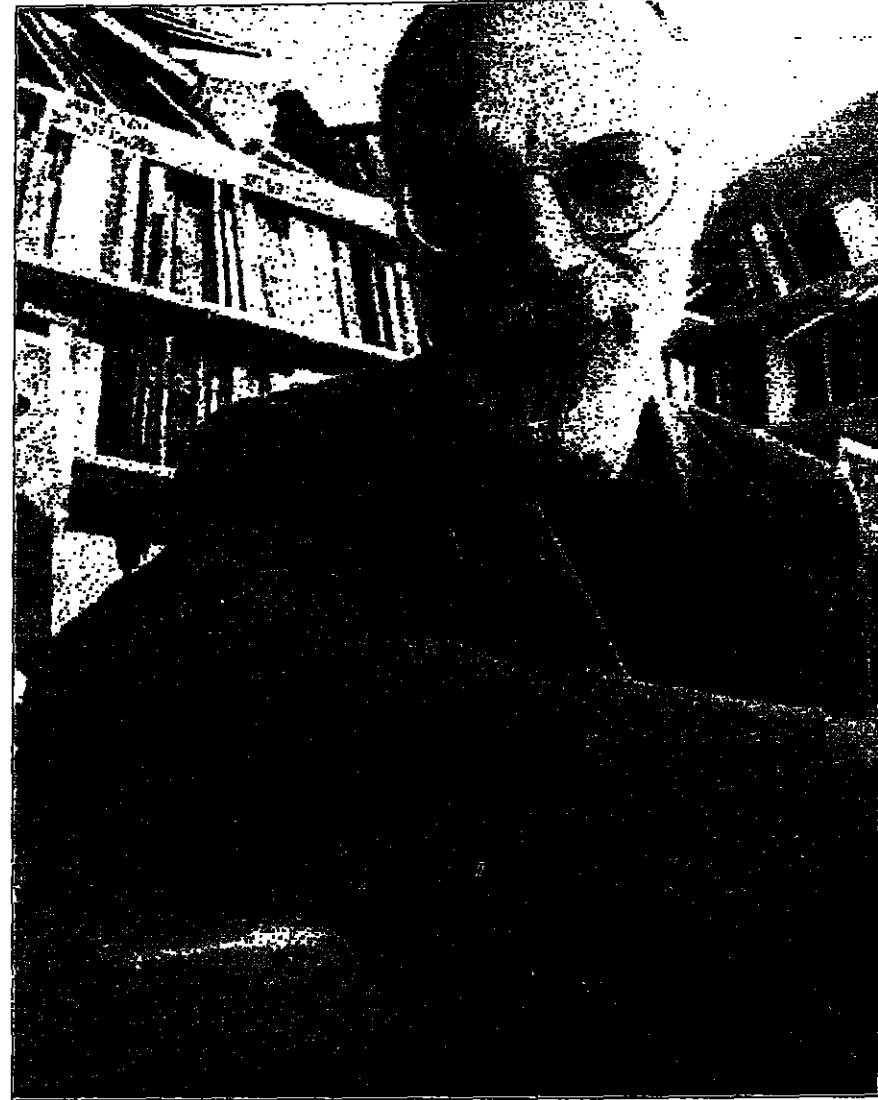
"They have the best set of dentures of any kind of animal that eats plants," Weishampel says. "This is a case, not of an island dead-end, but of an evolutionary experiment that really pays off when you get back to the mainland."

Of course, Count Dracula was famous for his dentition as well. But Weishampel is not eager to draw parallels between his monsters and the Dracula legend. Tales of vampires are not popular with Transylvanians these days.

"It brings these goofy Westerners" on guided Dracula tours, he says, wearing kitschy plastic fangs.

Next summer, Weishampel plans to resume his search for the region's duck-billed dinosaurs, armored dinosaurs, lumbering plant-eaters and scampering meat-eaters. But he is hoping to find big pieces of Romanian raptor. It's the sort of find that would give Transylvanian dinosaurs the kind of respect he thinks they deserve. "We only have tantalizing bits of him on hand," he says. "We're still looking for that skeleton." ■

LA Times-Washington Post
News Service



David B. Weishampel, a paleontologist at Johns Hopkins University, goes to the Balkans every summer to dig for dinosaurs. Photo by Andre F. Chung.

Sale of the century

Market system faces testing time

HOLLYWOOD TALKS to Bart & Nancy Mills

HOLLYWOOD ... Can-
dace



Shirley MacLaine

Cameron, who grew up in front of the world on "Full House," is now 30, married, and the star of a TV movie, "Freshman Fall," airing at the start of the fall season on NBC. In the movie she plays a college date rape victim, though she never went to college herself. Instead, she got married a week before starting work on "Freshman Fall" to Montreal Canadiens hockey player Valeri Bure. "I brought the script with me on my honeymoon and started reading it one day on the beach," she says, "but I put it away." Now billed as Candace Cameron Bure, the actress doesn't know if she will work again soon on a series. She says, "Not right now, anyway. Because I got married, I don't live in Los Angeles full time. I live in Montreal, and the hockey season is nine months long." Leaving open the door to a midwinter return to work, she adds, "I hate cold weather, so I'm not a big fan of Montreal. I'm a California girl."

Robert Harling is behind two of the fall's biggest movies with mostly-women casts: "The First Wives Club," which he wrote, and "The Evening Star," which he wrote and directed. "First Wives," starring Bette Midler, Diane Keaton and Goldie Hawn, is about the revenge that middle-aged divorcees take on the husbands who rejected them for younger second wives.

(Heather Locklear, Elizabeth Berkley and Sarah Jessica Parker). "I have very close friends who have been first wives and second wives," says the Louisiana-bred Harling, 44. "This touches a nerve, and when you're a storyteller, you want to touch the nerve." "Evening Star," a sequel to the 1983 hit "Terms of Endearment," stars Shirley MacLaine again as the mad-dancing Aurora. Harling is an old friend of MacLaine's: "We always spend our birthdays together if we can," he says. As for the movie, "It's about Aurora and her gentleman friends and her grandchildren. It's an extremely large group of dysfunctional people."

Anna Paquin, the tiny Oscar-winner from New Zealand, revealed in the chance to play a modern character in "Fly Away Home." It's the story of a girl and her father (Jeff Daniels) who decide to teach parentless Canada geese how to migrate. "A gosling hatched in my hand," Paquin marvels. "Before shooting started, they were all in incubators and the egg wrangler said I could hold one while it was hatching. It was a limp little thing, yellow and cute but very wet." Although Anna didn't get to fly the ultralight aircraft her character is seen using in the film to guide the geese, she says, "I got to zoom around on it while it was on the ground. I also swam with the geese in a rock quarry, although they wouldn't dive with me." Paquin learned so much making the movie, in fact, that she exasperated her co-star Daniels. "Listening to Anna's opinions, which are set in stone, reminds me of the time when I thought I knew everything," he sighs. "That stopped when I was 23. Anna's 13 and I play the su-

The Commanding Heights by Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw. Published by Simon & Schuster, \$18.99.

ON THE outskirts of Moscow, the Izmailovo outdoor market sprawls over acres on the south-west edge of the city, almost at the end of the subway line. Past and future are simultaneously on sale. Oil paintings of snowy villages and religious icons, many of dubious origin, commingling with South Korean electronics and cheap videocassettes.

And everywhere are the matryoshki, wooden dolls within dolls, but of endless variation: the traditional peasant women and a host of other characters, from Soviet leaders and US presidents to the Harlem Globetrotters. The favoured mode of payment is the dollar, the same dollar whose possession only a few years earlier could mean a stiff prison term.

Izmailovo is a particularly vibrant and stark symbol of how much has changed around the world since the 1970s in thinking about the relationship between state and marketplace. Socialists embracing capitalism, governments are selling off companies they had nationalized, and countries are seeking to entice multinational corporations, expelled just two decades earlier. Today, politicians of the left admit that their governments can no longer afford the expansive welfare state.

But the market system itself is destined to go through a great testing period, for this shift is engendering new anxieties and insecurities. They fear that government will no longer be there to protect them as they become intertwined in a global economy.

And they express unease about the price that the market demands of its participants and the possible embrace of "money culture." Shocks and turbulence in international capital markets, such as those that rolled Latin America in 1995 and south-east Asia in 1997, turn that unease into fundamental questions about the danger and even legitimacy of markets.

Yet Asia's crisis is less about markets than about the failures of markets' lack of transpa-

rency, speculative excess, political distortion compounded by tough and uncertain political transitions. And the prescribed cure for Asia's contagion looks to be "more market" not "more government."

Where the frontier between the state and market is to be drawn has never been a matter that could be settled, once and for all, at some grand peace conference. It has been the subject, over the course of this century, of massive intellectual and political battles, and constant skirmishes.

V.I. Lenin defined the issue: it was a matter, he explained, of who would control the "commanding heights," the most important elements of the economy. All this was before collectivization, Stalinism, and the total eradication of private markets in the Soviet Union.

The phrase found its way to Britain via the Fabians and the Labour party: it was then adopted by Nehru and the Congress party in India. Whether or not the term itself was used, the objective was one and the same: to ensure government control of strategic parts of the national economy, its major enterprises and industries.

Yet by the 1990s, the government was retreating. Communism had not only failed, it had all but disappeared in what had been the Soviet Union and, as an economic system, had been put aside in China. In the west, governments were shedding control and responsibilities. Instead of "market failure," the focus was now on "government failure" the inherent difficulties that arise when the state becomes too ambitious and seeks to be the main player, rather than a referee.

The unclipping of the state from the "commanding heights" marks a great divide between the 20th and 21st centuries. It is opening the doors of many formerly closed countries to trade and investment, and vastly increasing the global market.

Information technology is creating a "woven world" by promoting communication, coordination, integration, and contact at a pace of change that

far outruns the ability of any government to manage. The connections make national borders increasingly porous and increasingly irrelevant.

As the steam engine and the telegraph shrank the dimensions of the 19th century world, so technology today is once again eroding distance and borders.

For example, the number of international air passengers rose from 75 million in 1970 to 409 million in 1996. Today, the world shares the same images from film and entertainment; the same news and information bounces down from satellites, instantaneously creating a

few national stock exchanges could well become global exchanges, opening for business not long after the sun rises and not closing until well after dark.

When Harold Wilson was Britain's prime minister in the 1960s, he would blame the "gnomes of Zurich" for the pound's weakness, suggesting a cabal of Swiss bankers cynically betting against the British currency. No less colourful allegations against the "rogues" and "highwaymen" of the international economy surfaced with the crisis in south-east Asia. But thousands of traders drive a for-

Even if change in the direction of "more market" and "less state" is a pervasive global phenomenon, it does not lead to a single, common result. Success, political and corporate, is conditional on understanding regional dynamics.

If, in the industrialized countries, privatization, deregulation and the opening up of economies to competition are seen as job-destroying rather than job-creating, then free-market policies will surely be subject to continuing attack and constant revision. In developing countries, too, employment along with the rate of economic growth will be critical.

Failure to incorporate young people into productive work will mean that economic and political systems will be at risk. Another telling measure of success will be a clear-cut one: the degree to which the move to the market delivers such basics as electricity, clean water and reliable transport.

The market system will also be evaluated by the way in which success is distributed. Is the system fair and just? Or does it disproportionately benefit the rich and the avaricious? Does it treat people decently?

In all this, the private sector will find itself carrying an increasing environmental role. Not only will companies be regulated from a multitude of directions and by multiple authorities; they will also find themselves judged by the nature of their commitment to improving the environment.

But, of all the dangers, perhaps the greatest threat to the new consensus, and the confidence that underlies it, would arise from massive disruption of the international financial system. Capital markets are growing far faster than the capacity to regulate them or, indeed, even to understand them. The very scope and reach of the integrated global markets create financial risks on an unprecedented scale.

In the past, financial panics took weeks or even months to unfold. Now contagion can

sweep through the world's markets in hours, endangering the entire edifice. The danger arises not from the possibility of a shock but rather from the convergence of several shocks at one time.

"The probability of such convergence may be low. But there has been no shortage of severe shocks over the last decade. In 1995, Latin America suffered from the 'tequila effect' resulting from Mexico's devaluation; and now south-east Asia is trying to cope with crisis. Each of these events occurred more or less in isolation and was offset by strength elsewhere. The danger is not that one or the other type of shock takes place. The threat is of an unlucky conjunction."

In essence, the market's morality is twofold. The first is in delivering results based upon the premise that the pursuit of individual interest cumulatively means the betterment of society. The second lies in the conviction that a system based upon property, contracts and initiative provides protection against the arbitrary state power. If the market is seen to fail on either of results or restraint, then, surely, there will be a backlash a return to greater state intervention and control.

That outcome aside, what will be the new role of government? After all, there is no market without a government to define the rules and context. The state accepts the discipline of the market: government moves away from being producer, controller and intervener and becomes the referee, setting the rules of the game to ensure competition and opportunity.

This leaves governments with a daunting challenge: to figure out ways to reduce and refocus intervention, and carry out its responsibilities efficiently, while preserving public trust. It also means redesigning the welfare state so that it provides the social safety net and the skills required to cope with global competition. All this is a challenge for public policy and politics. It is also a challenge of imagination. ■

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THE STAR
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DiCaprio, other stars, left high and dry by Oscar

By Robert W. Welkos

HOLLYWOOD—Forget the envelope. Tell Billy Crystal he won't have to include them in his monologue.

Once again, the Oscar nominations are in and along with those who made it are those who didn't. Leonardo DiCaprio may be the current heartthrob among girls around the world, but his critically acclaimed performance as a doomed lover in "Titanic" failed to receive a best actor nomination this year.

Rupert Everett may have won widespread praise for his portrayal as the gay best friend and confidant of Julia Roberts in "My Best Friend's Wedding," turning the actor into an instant celebrity, but he also came up empty-handed Tuesday when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced its nominations for best supporting actor.

Djimon Hounsou may have received critical acclaim for his role as the leader of a shipboard slave rebellion in "Amistad." Yet, the African-born actor, who, like DiCaprio and Everett received Golden Globe nominations, also struck out in the Oscar balloting.

And don't even talk about James L. Brooks ("As Good as It Gets") and Steven Spielberg ("Amistad"), two directors who over the years have known both the agony and the ecstasy of Oscar time. Brooks won for "Terms of Endearment" but got acted out for best director in "Broadcast News," while Spielberg won best director for "Schindler's List" but never was nominated for "The Color Purple," even though he won the top award from the Directors Guild of America that year.

Actress Gloria Stuart, who at 87 received a best supporting actress nomination Tuesday for her role in "Titanic," said she has been going to the Academy Awards off and on since the 1930s and the one constant she has found is that there are no guarantees.

Noting that DiCaprio was overlooked while his co-star, Kate Winslet, received a best actress nomination in "Titanic," Stuart said:

"I don't understand it. I think their performances together were beautiful. But you see, it's so iffy. That's why I was so happy (to be

nominated) this morning. It's so iffy."

On Brooks' omission by the Academy, Greg Kinnear, who was nominated for best supporting actor in "As Good as It Gets," said: "...I think it was a huge omission, but it's his movie and his movie that's the nomination, so I think that's the greatest outcome."

Even in cyberspace, people were expressing outrage and puzzlement over why their favorite Oscar candidates were snubbed.

"Leo wasn't nominated????!!!!!! GASP," wrote Kathy on one "Titanic" web site. "How could this be?? He was fabulous in Titanic! Talk about unfair!! I'm going to



TITANIC

hays to write a strongly worded letter to the Academy about this!!"

"Fourteen nominations... how about that?!" said Dr. L. "I am very surprised that Leonardo was overlooked, the (Titanic) screenplay was overlooked, James L. Brooks wasn't nominated for best director for 'As Good as It Gets,' and you can barely tell that Spielberg did a movie this year."

One of this year's omissions—and long a sore point with critics of the academy balloting—was the death of black nominees.

An exception was Spike Lee's "4 Little Girls," a film about the bombing of an Alabama church during the American civil rights struggle that received a best feature-length documentary nomination.

"Yet just as Hounsou was overlooked for 'Amistad,' actress Pam Grier was similarly overlooked for her performance in director Quentin

Tarantino's 'Jackie Brown.'"

Also snubbed by the academy was "Eve's Bayou," which was nominated for best first feature at the Independent Spirit Awards and received seven NAACP Image Award nominations, including best motion picture.

Some other notable snubs:

■ Daniel Day-Lewis. The actor received a Golden Globe nomination for his gritty portrayal as a former Irish Republican Army terrorist released from prison in "The Boxer." In fact, the entire film, including the film's director, Jim Sheridan, was overlooked.

■ Sigourney Weaver. The actress was nominated for a Golden Globe award for her role as a cold-hearted housewife in "The Ice Storm."

■ Al Pacino. The veteran actor and former Oscar winner won the Boston Film Critics award for his role as a small-time mobster in "Donnie Brasco."

■ Kevin Spacey. The actor received a Golden Globe nomination for his role in "L.A. Confidential."

■ Paul Thomas Anderson. The director became one of the hottest commodities in Hollywood in 1997 after his critically acclaimed film, "Boogie Nights," which explored the adult movie scene in Los Angeles during the late 1970s and early '80s.

■ Jodie Foster. Jessica Lange. Kevin Kline. All three are former Oscar winners who turned in performances that prompted talk of Oscar nominations: Foster as a determined radio astronomer in "Contact," Jessica Lange as a woman with a dark family secret in "A Thousand Acres" and Kevin Kline as a small-town teacher who denies he is gay in "In & Out."

When asked about "Boogie Nights" director Anderson failing to get a nomination, Julianne Moore, who was nominated for best supporting actress in the film, said:

"That's the thing. On the one hand, it's so lovely and thrilling to be recognized in this way. On the other hand, people who are wonderful at making films... (sometimes) aren't acknowledged. So, you have to take it with a grain of salt."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Pamela Dennis helps the stars shine on their big night

By Booth Moore

HOLLYWOOD—A petite blond in a sheer leopard-print blouse and skinny black cigarette pants, evening-wear designer Pamela Dennis is a bundle of nervous energy one recent Sunday afternoon at Neiman Marcus.

"This is totally a Helen," she says, clutching a beaded chiffon slipdress from her spring collection. "And this one, this would look totally hot on Anne," she offers, fingering a super-short black lame wrap dress with lace trim. "How about this one for Meg?" she says, proffering a beaded ivory tulle gown. "With her coloring, this would be perfect."

That's Helen as in Helen Hunt, Anne as in Anne Heche and Meg as in—who else?—Meg Ryan. All of this first-name-only dropping means one thing: It's awards season again in Hollywood, and Dennis, fresh off the plane from New York, is hawking her wares with the same zeal you'd expect from a merchant moving carpets in a Persian bazaar.

At 36, Dennis has been on the fashion scene for nearly a decade, during which she has dressed some of Hollywood's biggest stars for a variety of important occasions.

"I usually try to be around a few days before an event. It's very last-minute with celebrities, and they seem to wear whatever they feel like that day," she says, gathering the folds of a gown into a duffel bag for a waiting Daisy Fuentes, who may (or may not) decide to wear it for that night's People's Choice Awards ceremony.

Celebrity stylists drop in, browse, then stuff \$3,000 and \$4,000 gowns into duffel bags with little more care than they would give items on final clearance at Loeblin's. Dennis



Evening-wear designer Pamela Dennis, 36, has been on the fashion scene for nearly a decade, during which she has dressed some of Hollywood's biggest stars. Photo by Carolyn Cole.

doesn't mind.

"The bottom line is, a celebrity could be in one of these gowns tonight and be photographed," Dennis says. "You have to be Johnny on the spot."

That's something Dennis has gotten good at. Last year, when Ellen Degeneres and Heche chose her designs on the eve of the Emmys (Degeneres a brown tuxedo pantsuit and Heche a brown beaded mini-dress), Dennis had to have the outfits lined, fitted and shipped from New York—all in 24 hours.

Dressing women for big events has always been Dennis' forte. It is, after all, how she discovered her own flair for fashion and, in turn, how she was discovered.

"It all started when I was looking for something to wear to a friend's wedding," the New Jersey resident remembers. "The

only thing out there were ball gowns, but I wanted something young, simple and sexy."

So instead of studying for the law school entrance exams, she designed and made a dress for herself. It was plain and black, with a plunging back, bordered in black feathers. A guest at the wedding was a stylist and wanted to use the dress for a De Beers diamond commercial. Voilà! Dennis had a contract and the confidence to start her own business.

Her big break came when Jamie Lee Curtis called.

"She wanted to wear one of my gowns to the Cannes Film Festival. Her body in my stretch georgette dress—it was like the perfect marriage," Dennis remembers.

Even now, when dozens of big-name designers have entered the

competition for young-evening-wear customers, Dennis is still in demand. She dressed Kate Winslet, one of the stars of "Titanic," for this year's Golden Globes.

But for all the glitz and glamour of working with celebrities, Dennis really loves meeting ordinary people at trunk shows, she says. She has found that the needs of her regular clients and actresses aren't very different. Her advice?

"At a party, you want to make a splash, but I don't think anyone wants to look like they're on top of a piano anymore," she says. "Understated elegance. Less is always more."

Also, women should be realistic about their body types when looking for evening wear, she says.

"If you are very thin, light colors are great. Periwinkle, liquid silver, those colors of the moment are great on waifs. But if you are heavier, stick to dark colors," Dennis advises. "I also really like cashmere wraps around the shoulders for evening. They're very classy." old Hollywood.

There is one major difference between her real woman and the celebrity shoppers—and it's evident at the cash register. Stars have the privilege of borrowing gowns for awards shows. "Sometimes celebs want to keep the dresses. Even if they'll never wear them again, the PR value from one appearance is invaluable," she says.

In an effort to make her clothes more accessible, a secondary line, the Pamela Dennis Collection, has been launched for spring. It includes evening suits, beaded cashmere twinsets and cocktail dresses, all in the \$1,000 range.

Those who want their own piece of Hollywood glamour can find both collections at Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus. ■

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THE STAR'S STATION COMPUTING & HIGH TECH NOTION

Edited by Zeid Nasser

Amidst more 'expert' opinions that the world is still unprepared for it:

Year 2000 bug gains in

IT SEEMS that there are many voices of pessimism regarding the ability of handling the year 2000 bug.

It is expected that most aspects of our modern life, which are computerized, will simply malfunction.

Your credit card may expire, and your insurance policy may get lost, because of computer malfunctions. A report even predicts that cheques will bounce and salaries may be delayed!

The reason is that most companies worldwide still don't take the year 2000 problem seriously enough, either due to their disbelief that havoc will result or because they would rather not incur the very high costs involved in debugging; therefore, opting for the choice of taking a risk. The problem is that this risk is shared by millions of people all over the world whose normal rhythm of life may be altered.

For those of you who still don't know what the year 2000 bug is all about (Where have you been?), it is an expected computer malfunction that will take place on the stroke of midnight, on 31 December, 1999, because computer internal clocks cannot differentiate between the '00's in the year

1900 and the year 2000.

The results will be default reactions of computer systems to this dating mistake.

These reactions include cancelling or distorting any 'timed' transaction—which is supposed to run from a certain



date to another, for example—and these include virtually everything to do with money. Invoicing, payroll, purchasing systems and others will go haywire. Phone cards will expire automatically, bank loans will be mis-reported, and so will other 'dated' services, those which are supposed to cease to offer services to you at a certain date.

Experts on the matter believe that it will take more than the less than 685 days

remaining till the year 2000, to properly correct the problem worldwide.

Even the airline industry is bracing itself for the problem, with major international companies already announcing that they probably won't be able to ensure accurate schedules and during the year 2000, due to expected computer malfunctions.

All sorts of delays will take place in the tourism industry as most dated agreements and arrangements will go berserk. Your booking at a hotel, may well be erased, or your rental of a car may be nullified!

Legal complications will be paramount with both shareholders and customers suing companies that had previously committed to providing timely services. Damages may run into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

On another note, programmers skilled in solving this problem are commanding top salaries. Well, at least some people are going to benefit from the year 2000 bug!

Information system managers in Jordanian organizations need to take this issue seriously. If the rest of the world is worried, then maybe we should be too. Think about that. ■

Computer & IT companies !!

Welcome to The Star's Workstation, the absolute source on what's hot and what's not in Jordan's IT market. Fax us on 648298 or email us at StarNETS.com.Jo with your news and views.

American Computer Show 98

THE EMBASSY of the United States of America will be holding the annual American Computer Show on 31 March, 1998, at the Radisson SAS hotel in Amman.

This event has become a major annual computer and information technology show that attracts thousands of visitors and represents an excellent promotion opportunity for Jordanian dealers and dis-

tributors of American products. As is the case every year, you can expect to see all the latest computer hardware, software and accessories available on the Jordanian market. Local computer and information technology companies of all sizes are expected to participate in the show, as most have enjoyed good results in past years of participation, and the event

has rightfully assumed a top position in the commercial sector. Following the opening ceremony on 31 March, the show will be open to the public for two days.

For more information on the American Computer Show '98, contact the Commercial Section at the Embassy of the United States of America on telephone 5920101. ■

Intel Pentium 33MHz is here

AS EXPECTED, Intel's latest, fastest Pentium processor is out. A 33MHz version of the Pentium II has been introduced, with many PC makers already having committed to including it in upcoming models; among the first will be IBM. To begin with, the processor will be incorporated in workstations and servers, which is customary for a new Pentium II

processor, especially as its relatively high introduction price would make it not feasible to incorporate the processor into a regular desktop PC system aimed at small businesses or home users.

Of course, it will give much more breathing space for the current 233 and 266 MHz processors available on the market, possibly raising the entry-level for normal

users to these processors. Prior to Intel's latest announcement, the Intel Pentium II 300MHz was the fastest chip on the block. It remains readily available on the market and has much headway to make in the market.

By the end of this year, you can expect to see the processor in most regular desktop PC offering from a multi-

News update

Microsoft acquires HotMail

● As part of its push to lead the new information age, Microsoft has acquired HotMail, the fast-growing free email firm which built its wealth on the simple concept of providing users all over the world with free email addresses, and selling adver-

tising and sponsorship opportunities at its site as a source of revenue. HotMail boasts 9.5 million users.

Compaq & Digital to merge!

● Two giants in the computer hardware business, Compaq Computer and Digital Equipment Corp. (DEC),

are proceeding with plans and preparations for a merger of businesses!

Currently, both corporations are taking measures to ensure that their are no legal or regulatory boundaries facing their merger.

The resulting company should have annual sales of around \$38 billion.

Brother HL 1060 Laserprinter

AS PART of Brother's range of practical laser printers, the company introduced the HL 1060 which prints at speeds of 10 pages per minute, with 1200 dots per inch (dpi), and offers PCL 5e. It comes with 2MB RAM memory, expandable to 32MB using SIMM technology and provides automatic printing out of email. The HL 1060 uses 25 percent less electrical energy than similar models, and utilizes a special efficiency system which saves toner ink. The Brother HL 1060 is IBM compatible (optional Macintosh compatibility), and offers an optional networking card. Brother's latest range of laser printers are very attractively priced. For more information on Brother printers, contact General Computer & Electronics (GCE), at telephone 5513879.



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Hassan sets Egypt off to a good start

BOBO-DIOULASSO, Burkina Faso—Hassan Hassan rekindled memories of past glories with two goals for Egypt as they beat Mozambique 2-0 in their group D match at the African Nations Cup finals on Tuesday.

The 31-year-old striker played at the 1990 World Cup finals in Italy but had been ignored by the Egyptian national selectors in recent years.

His rehabilitation by coach Mahmoud Al-Gohari, his manager at Italia '90, paid dividends with well-taken goals that have set the Egyptians off to solid start in the competition.

With Zambia and World Cup finalists Morocco having drawn 1-1 in Bobo-Dioulasso on Monday, Egypt now top group D.

Hassan's predatory instinct was on display in the 14th minute as he scored from close range after Mozambican defender Pinto Barros had cleared off the line from Hazem Imam.

Hassan's second goal came a minute before halftime with a header from a Yasser Radwan cross.

Al-Gohari, under pressure from a demanding public at home, was pleased with the result but felt his team could offer more. "You didn't see the best, we suffered from the heat," he said.

He admitted that the remaining group matches against Zambia and Morocco would be more testing encounters.

Mozambique, who have yet to win a match in three appearances at the finals tournament, rarely troubled Egypt's strong defence. Teen-



Hassan & Radwan

aged midfielder Avelino struck the crossbar with a rasping first-half effort that was the closest the team got to a goal.

They showed little imagination and were thwarted by a well-drilled Egyptian midfield, where Hany Ramzy, usually a defender with German side

Werder Bremen, was outstanding.

Tuesday's match was watched by a paltry crowd at the newly-built Omnisport stadium. All of the 16 countries at the Nations Cup finals have now played in the competi-

Technology revolutionizes speed skating

By Michael Wilbon

NAGANO, Japan Welcome to Olympic speedskating, where today's record holder can also be today's chump. TX: Skater in a phone call home: "Mom, the good news is I set an Olympic record 45 minutes ago. The bad news is I'm now in 11th place." An Italian skater named Ermanno Ioriatti must have been feeling pretty good about himself when he began the men's 500-meter competition by setting an Olympic record. The feeling didn't last.

An American, Casey Fitzrandolph, broke Ioriatti's now record a few minutes later. A few minutes after that, Canadian Kevin Overland broke Fitzrandolph's record. And then Japan's Hiroyasu Shimizu broke Overland's record. In all, of the 41 skaters who finished the first half of the men's sprint skate Monday, 11 beat the mark that was the Olympic record when the session began. In Sunday's men's 5,000-meter race the world record was broken three times in less than

two hours. Why? Technology. Clap skates and glued-on uniform strips, to be exact.

Technology hasn't changed a sport so dramatically since marathons began wearing shoes. Or at least not since tennis rackets went from wood to graphite. Skaters and coaches

believe the clap skates can reduce times by as much as one-half second per lap, which will enable skaters to obliterate long-distance records here at the Olympics, and even more dramatically in upcoming international events as they get used to the new skates.

The conversation around a fittingly futuristic M-Wave arena, where the speedskaters are competing, is less about who's winning than how the sport is evolving at warp speed. "It's certainly progress, and it's hard to stand in the way of

progress," said Eric Heiden, Mr. Speedskating from the 1980 Olympics and now a television analyst, after Monday's record-breaking extravaganza. "And what happened here today all points down to what people are wearing on their feet." The concept behind the

clap skates is fairly easy to understand.

There's a mechanism, basically a hinge-and-spring device manufactured in the Netherlands, that attaches to the skate and allows the entire blade to stay on the ice a fraction of a

second longer than the traditional blade. That drag allows the skater better balance and a stronger push on every stride, thus a faster pace. The skates have been around in some form for 100 years. Dutch children have been wearing them forever.

But nobody thought about using them in competition until recently when some of those Dutch children grew up and began competing in international junior races. Suddenly, it became obvious to everyone that the Dutch skaters had an advantage that human resources alone couldn't overcome. "What the International Skating Union needs to do," Canadian Coach Derrick Auch said, "is regulate innovation to make sure there's no motors or gears next." Heiden added: "But you have to make sure everyone has a chance to obtain it and everyone has a chance to try it."

You remember Ard Schenk, the great Dutch skater (1968 bronze medalist, 1972 gold medalist)? He can't even get a pair of clap skates from the Dutch company which makes them. You have to use them now. You have to. But it caught a lot of skaters off guard. And now people are scrambling to get ahold of a mechanism and they can't make them fast enough. Heiden said he hadn't yet tried clap skates. But another well-known American Olympian, Dan Jansen, said he has, His

impression? "They work," he said, adding that every record men's and women's in the distance races will fall soon, or very soon. "It's changed the sport in every aspect," said Jansen, also working as a broadcast analyst.

Clap skates have been around long enough for almost everybody in the skating community to have a feel for them, but these mysterious strips are another story. Depending on whom you talk to, they're either the coolest aerodynamic invention you can think of, or a psych job that has absolutely no effect on wind and (thus) time reduction. Again, this is pretty much a Dutch deal. "The strips are made of silicon," Heiden said. "The Dutch skating officials tested it primarily in a stationary position."

And the coefficient of drag is reduced using those strips. They break up the wind as it comes around you. And wind resistance is one of the biggest obstacles. "You can't believe what a buzz these strips have caused. Some skating folks say the Dutch are playing mind games, that the strips are totally bogus. The Dutch point to their skaters finishing 1, 2, 3 (a Dutchman skating for Belgium won the bronze), and 4 in the 5,000. When Canada's Robert Tremblay was told the Dutchmen said Canadians were wearing the strips incorrectly, Tremblay said, "That's what they say. We don't think so."

Nobody seems to have any answers about these silicon strips because the ISU only approved them Monday before the start of competition here. "I just heard about the strips for the first time yesterday," Jansen said. "Let's go back to skating, because it's getting frustrating with all these things." That won't be possible. Reportedly, not one competitor here is using traditional skates. More and more appear to be wearing the strips. Seconds are being shredded like wind. So what comes after silicon strips? What's the next wind-piercing innovation? "Maybe," Heiden said, "skaters will just be born in the shape of a wedge." ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

By Grahame L. Jones

LOS ANGELES—Their names were Billy Gonzales and Bert Patenaude, and the reason they are mentioned here will become clear before long.

For now, however, simply remember their names.

Why? Because the United States on Tuesday night scored one of the great upsets in soccer history, defeating Brazil—as in world champion Brazil—on a superb second-half goal by Preki.

The 1-0 result stunned the Los Angeles Coliseum crowd of 12,298 almost as much as it did the Brazilians. It was the first time the United States had ever beaten Brazil.

Preki's goal was the first the U.S. has scored against the South Americans in 68 years.

The loss was only Brazil's second since it won the World Cup by beating Italy a few miles away at the Rose

US beats Brazil for first time

Bowl in 1994.

The newspapers in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo are likely to be seething Wednesday in their criticism of the fallen champions. Instead, they should praise the two players who made the American victory possible.

The first was goalkeeper Casey Keller, who was outstanding in the net, making a total of 10 saves, many of them bordering on the incredible.

The second was Preki, who followed his game-winning goal against Costa Rica in Oakland on Saturday with an infinitely more memorable strike Tuesday.

At the final whistle, shortly before 10 p.m., the U.S. bench sprinted onto the field to engulf the players. The fans, who had been chanting "USA, USA" for much of the

latter part of the game, stayed in their seats while Keller and Preki did on-field television interviews, then applauded the two as they ran down the Coliseum tunnel.

Up in the press box, radio reporters shouted the bad news down the phone lines in Portuguese to an astonished audience in Brazil.

It was the greatest American soccer triumph since the upset of Colombia in the 1994 World Cup. In many ways, it was even more important than that.

The entire soccer world will awake Wednesday morning to the news that the world champions have been beaten. Never mind that the victory put the U.S. into the final of the CONCACAF Gold Cup. More significant is the credibility it gives to

all U.S. Soccer has been doing for the past decade to build the sport in the United States.

The U.S. had lost eight consecutive games to Brazil since their first encounter in 1930. The Brazilians had recently denied the U.S. in four consecutive tournaments.

The Americans will have to come back to earth by Sunday, when they will play the winner of Thursday night's semifinal between Mexico and Jamaica.

Preki's goal, in the 65th minute, came a mere five minutes after he had been sent into the game as a replacement for Roy Wegerle.

Eric Wundela took the ball down the left flank and passed inside to Preki. The 34-year-old forward turned defender Junior inside out with a nifty move, then

unleashed a shot from 22 yards that screamed into the net just inside the left post. Brazilian goalkeeper Claudio Taffarel, himself a World Cup winner in 1994, launched himself through the air but was too late to stop the shot.

Preki was engulfed by teammates on the sideline, after which the U.S. settled down to keep the Brazilians at bay for the final 25 minutes.

They raised the level of their game several notches and, as each minute ticked by, it appeared they could pull off the impossible.

Against all odds, they did. The last time the U.S. had scored against Brazil was on Aug. 17, 1930 in Rio de Janeiro, where Brazil scored the first of its eight victories over the U.S. by a

cheers